

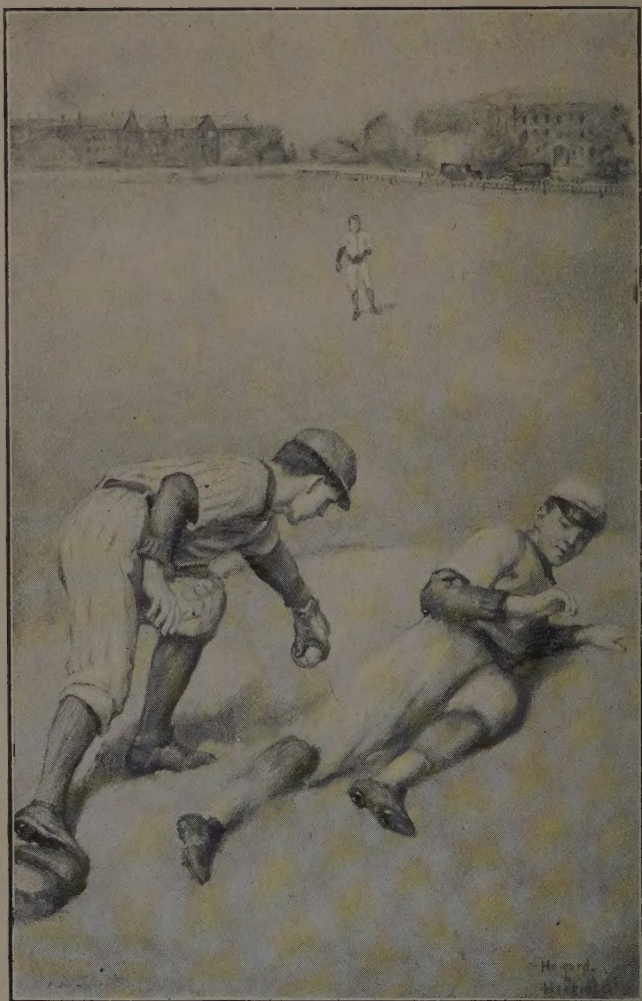
YANK BROWN PITCHER



DAVID STONE

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#5 of



The third baseman received the throw almost ankle high.

Frontispiece (see page 165)

YANK BROWN PITCHER

By

DAVID STONE

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"Yank Brown, Forward," Etc.

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The third baseman received the
throw almost ankle high . . *Frontispiece*

The Sophomores crowded into the
room and repeated the process
with Peanut's arms *page 79*

The plane, circling directly over
them, slowed down *page 145*

"Get in there!" he commanded . . *page 205*

YANK BROWN, PITCHER

CHAPTER I

THE CHALLENGE

IT was the first of June. Track season had ended, but three weeks still remained before the close of Yank Brown's freshman year at Belmont College. Yank, sitting on the window-seat of his room in the corner of the ivy-covered dormitory, glanced over the shaded campus below him and smiled contentedly.

"It's been a big year, Peanut," he remarked to the fat boy who was curled up beside him. "But I guess our troubles are over now, for a while at least."

Peanut, however, stirred restlessly.

"You can't tell," he answered gloomily. "A lot of things can happen in three weeks."

Yank regarded his roommate with twinkling eyes.

"You're wasting your time coming to college, Peanut," he declared in mock seriousness. "What you ought to do is learn the undertaker's trade. You're a regular killjoy."

"Killjoy nothin'." Peanut indignantly rolled to a sitting position, clasped his hands around his knees, and met Yank's look defiantly. "If it hadn't been for me and my warnings," he said injuredly, "maybe you wouldn't be feeling quite so flip as you do. There was, for instance——"

But Yank interrupted him.

"Peanut, old chap," he declared earnestly, "I wouldn't have you think for a moment that I don't appreciate how loyal you've been all through the year. And the only thing I can't understand is how under the sun you went through all your weird experiences without wasting away more than you have. As it is, you can't possibly weigh more than two hun-

dred and fifty pounds, and if you keep on worrying——”

Peanut snorted.

“Even though I am fat,” he broke in, “I’ve got *feelings*.”

“Sure you have.” Yank’s eyes grew suddenly serious. “It *has* been a big year, hasn’t it, Chum?” he asked.

The other boy nodded without answering, and they relapsed into pregnant silence, each busy with his own thoughts. The past year *had* been a momentous one, there was no doubt of that. Some of us have read about it in the first volumes of the Yank Brown series. In “Yank Brown, Halfback,” Yank had entered Belmont College as an unknown freshman, had distinguished himself in the annual Proclamation Rush, and had been elected president of the first year class. As leader of the Freshies he had incurred the hostility of Hal Marvin, the Sophomore president; had won from Hal a place as halfback on the varsity football team, and had then brought victory to Bel-

mont in the first game against Steelton by kicking a field goal in the last minute of play. But he had during the course of the season saved Hal's life by a sensational dive into the river from the railroad bridge, and had changed the other boy from a rival into one of the best friends he had ever known.

Then, in "Yank Brown, Forward," Yank had gone out for the basketball team, had met Doug Fletcher, a quiet-voiced freshman who had seen service in France and won a medal of honor. Peanut, too, had distinguished himself as a plunger on the swimming team and had won his varsity "B," in spite of the efforts of Paul Maynard, a senior, who had plotted many evil things against both him and Yank.

In the third volume, "Yank Brown, Cross-Country Runner," there had been some trouble with a colony of Anarchists living across the river from the college campus; but again Yank and his friends had emerged triumphant, and Yank and Doug Fletcher had been able,

by their combined skill and courage, to win the cross-country run against Steelton. Finally, in "Yank Brown, Miler," they had succeeded in driving the Anarchist colony from the neighborhood, and Yank had achieved his fourth college victory of the year by winning the mile run in the big dual meet with Steelton. By his victories, Yank had stamped himself as one of the greatest all-around athletes in the history of Belmont College.

But now the big year was ending, and there was nothing to look forward to except a summer of idleness. So Yank stared thoughtfully over the tree-spotted campus and gave himself up to moody reflections. He did not want the year to end, did not want to go back to his home in Kansas and leave behind him his new-found friends. Still, there were other college years to come.

"Peanut," Yank said suddenly, "it will be sort of nice, won't it, just to hang around for three weeks without worrying about whether we beat Steelton in track, or wanting to eat a

piece of pie and not daring to? Training is all right for a while, but it gets tiresome after a time."

Peanut nodded.

"I trained only once during the year," he answered. "And that was during swimming season. Even then, though, just between you and me and the lamp-post, when I wanted to eat a piece of pie, I ate it. That's the kind of a fellow *I* am."

"That's the reason you're what you are—the fattest man in college," Yank retorted. He stood up, and stretched his arms luxuriously. "Here it is after four o'clock," he said happily, "and I don't have to report for track, or anything."

"How about the 'movies'?" Peanut suggested.

For a moment Yank hesitated. There was a good show down at the Strand, and he would like to see it. Still. . . . He shook his head reluctantly.

"I'd like to go, Peanut," he announced, "but

I've been sort of shirking my lessons during the past few weeks, and I have a faint idea that it would be well to get down and plug a bit."

Peanut grinned.

"If lessons interfere with your outside work, give up your lessons," he quoted. "Come on!"

But Yank remained firm, for it was characteristic of him that when once he made a decision, he stuck to it. And now he had decided to study. Peanut, realizing the futility of argument, turned to his own History book.

"Maybe I'd better brush up a bit myself," he said.

For perhaps ten minutes the room was silent, except for the low mumblings of Peanut Putnam, who insisted that he could not learn anything unless he said it over to himself. And then, just when Yank was beginning to think that he was really going to get some work done, the door opened, and two members of his own class came in. They were Doug Fletcher and Art Minton; the former

star basketball and track man, the latter vice-president of the class.

Peanut looked up happily at the interruption.

"Hello, you fellows," he said cordially. "Glad you came in." He grimaced over at Yank. "This shark here," he explained, "was trying to make me study."

Doug Fletcher grinned.

"If Peanut's really so anxious to work," he said to Yank, "we'll only stay a minute."

"Sit down," Peanut broke in. "I'll curb my anxiety for a while at least."

"What we came to see you about," Doug continued, "is the annual interclass baseball game."

"What's that?" Yank asked.

"Every year, during the first week in June, the freshmen and sophomores play a baseball game," Art Minton explained. "Generally, the Sophs challenge the Freshies, but they've put it off so long this year that I'm beginning to think they're not going to do it."

"Supposing they don't?"

"Then it's up to us to challenge them."

Yank nodded. As president of the freshman class, it was probably his job to issue the challenge.

"It will be all right then, if we do it?" he asked.

"Sure. It will be sort of putting one over on them."

Yank grinned.

"We've been doing it all year," he said, "and we might just as well finish things up right. How about it? Have we got any good men?"

"The best players, of course, are on the varsity team," Minton answered. "But we ought to be able to get some kind of bunch together."

"When I was young," the irrepressible Peanut put in, "I was something of a player myself. In fact, I was famous in my home town of Circleville, N. Y., as a catcher of great promise. If John McGraw had ever heard of me——"

"Sit on him, Doug," Yank commanded; and

after Peanut had been subdued, he turned again to Art Minton. "I suppose we ought to hold a class meeting," he suggested.

"The thing to do," Minton answered, "is to send the Sophs a challenge, then have a meeting and elect a captain."

"If you fellows think it's all right," Peanut began, "I'll be glad to accept the honor. Of course, my modesty——"

Doug Fletcher stuffed a pillow against the fat boy's grinning face, and nodded to Yank.

"We can get a team together, somehow," he said. "I played baseball a bit last year, and Art was on the prep school team. There are probably a lot of other fellows who will come out. How about you?"

"I pitched a bit back home," Yank answered. "But I never was any wonder at it."

"We'll be all right then. Let's write out the challenge."

They found a large piece of paper in Peanut's desk; and then, while the others looked on critically and made many suggestions,

Yank penned the freshmen's defiance to the members of the sophomore class.

"To the Sophs of Belmont College:" (the notice read)

"The honorable FRESHMAN CLASS, having not as yet received word that the second year men desire to play baseball game with the honorable FRESHMEN, hereby challenge the hesitating sophomores to play a game of ball On the College Commons, at three o'clock Friday afternoon, June 6. The sophs can make their own rules, and have their own umpire, if they can find one. But unless this challenge is answered by to-morrow morning, the FRESHMEN will claim the contest by default.

Signed: CLASS OF 1925."

The four boys reviewed their handiwork with open satisfaction.

"They'll *have* to play us after that," Art Minton declared. "What shall we do, send it to Hal Marvin?"

"He's president of the Sophs and the one to get it," Peanut answered.

But Yank shook his head.

"We'll do better than that," he decided.
"We'll post it on the bulletin board."

Forgetful of lessons and everything else except the coming baseball game, Yank and his three friends hurried across the campus to the college bulletin board in the corridor of Blair Hall. Chuckling, they posted it in a conspicuous place upon the board.

"I guess that will hold them for a while," Peanut said.

Before Chapel the next morning, the whole college had heard about the challenge.

CHAPTER II

THE FRESHMAN TEAM

YANK, returning from class the following day, found an envelope on his desk in the dormitory, which had evidently been left there only a short time before. It contained an answer to the freshman challenge, brief and to the point.

"The sophomores accept with pleasure the freshmen's invitation to play a baseball game on Friday of this week," he read. "*The fight is on!*"

Yank grinned. He knew that Hal Marvin, the rival president, had written the answer, and he knew, too, that when Hal declared that the fight was on, he meant it.

For the past few months, hostilities had been more or less at a standstill between the freshmen and sophomores. It was always

that way at Belmont, Yank had been told, for the freshmen had gradually learned the rules of the college, had absorbed college custom and tradition, until most of the fun of hazing them had been lost. But now, with the posting of the baseball challenge, hostilities between the two under classes promised to be renewed.

"It means that we'll be kept on the jump from now until Commencement, I suppose," Yank told himself. "And I was just beginning to think that we were going to take things easy, too!"

He did not know whether he was glad or sorry over the resumption of hostilities. It would mean, of course, that he would have to be on the watch every minute to frustrate any plans which the Sophs might devise, and that the three weeks of quietude which he had looked forward to would not materialize. But Yank was naturally active, and restless when there was nothing to do; so he shut his lips and determined to give the sophomores as good as they sent. The first gun in the cam-

paign, he decided, would be to call a class meeting to consider the baseball game.

It had been customary, since the beginning of the second term, for the freshmen to hold their meetings openly, without fear of interruption from the sophomores. But now, since the truce had been broken, Yank was wary.

"There's no use of taking chances," he said to Peanut. "We'll pass the word around in Chapel to-morrow morning for a meeting in the gymnasium at twelve o'clock."

"Why at twelve o'clock?" Peanut wanted to know.

"The sophs will be in the dining hall then," Yank explained, "and won't even suspect us."

Peanut grinned wryly.

"That means," he said, "that all the grub will be gone by the time we get back to the dorm."

Yank nodded.

"Yes," he answered chidingly. "That's what it means, Peanut. But if you'd rather eat than stick up for your class——"

"Bosh!" Peanut interrupted. "I'll be there, of course."

Yank's plan proved to be a good one, for immediately after the last morning class was ended, the sophomores hurried to the dining hall. They were aware that hostilities with the freshman class had been renewed, but they did not suspect that the Freshies would bother to hold a meeting during the noon hour; and anyhow, they were too hungry to worry much about it. So Yank and his cohorts were undisturbed.

There were over a hundred freshmen at the meeting, most of them frankly overjoyed at Yank's flaunting challenge. There was hardly a man of them who had not suffered some indignity at the hands of the sophomores, and they welcomed the renewal of hostilities as a chance to pay back.

"I've been waiting all year to get a wallop at that big boob who soaked me five dollars for my Chapel seat," one shrill-voiced fresh-

man announced. "And now, if he starts anything, I'm going to land him one."

The subdued murmur of voices died down, however, when Yank climbed to the top of a set of parallel bars and explained the purpose of the meeting.

"We'll have to hurry and get things over with," he said, "or the sophs might notice our vacant seats in the dining hall and try to bust things up. Whom shall we elect baseball captain?"

Doug Fletcher, grinning, held up his hand.

"I nominate Peanut Putnam," he said loudly. "In his home town he was a famous player. He told us so himself."

There was a roar of laughter at that.

"Second the motion," someone called.

"Hurrah for Peanut!"

"Oh, you Skinny!"

Two or three of the freshmen looked dubious, however.

"How about it?" one of them asked. "Isn't he too fat for a baseball player?"

"He can be the backstop," someone else suggested. "All he'll have to do is to stand behind the plate and nothing can get by him."

The crowd chuckled.

"Speech! Speech!" Art Minton called.

Peanut, his face solemn but his eyes twinkling, pushed his way to the front of the room. He held up his hand, and his classmates relapsed into expectant silence.

"Of course," Peanut began pompously, "I shall be greatly honored to be captain of the baseball team of such an illustrious class as our own. In fact, I shall be overcome with the honor of it. In other words——"

"Hurrray!" someone called. "I move Peanut be elected unanimously."

"Second the motion!"

Yank held up his hand.

"All in favor say aye," he commanded.

The chorus of "ayes" rocked the rafters of the building, swept through the open door, and boomed out upon the campus. A single sophomore who happened to be coming out

of the college library, heard it, hesitated for a moment, and then decided to investigate. Very cautiously, so as not to be observed, he crept upon the porch of the gymnasium, and peeked in. And as he did so, a freshman standing near the door discovered him.

"A soph!" he cried shrilly. "Here's a soph trying to break up our meeting."

The sophomore, finding himself discovered, turned toward the dormitory and cupped his hands.

"Sophomores this way!" he boomed.
"Sophomores this way!"

Before he could give other than that single warning, however, he was seized from behind by three husky freshmen and carried bodily into the main gymnasium. The first year mob crowded around him eagerly.

"Soak him!" someone suggested. "He tried to break up our meeting."

"What shall we do with him?" Doug Fletcher asked.

For an instant, Yank Brown hesitated. He

knew that according to the rules of interclass warfare, the freshmen could do almost anything they wanted to with the sophomores, provided they did not injure them. The college year was almost ended, however, and for a moment he was half tempted to let their captive go. Then suddenly, his lips tightened. Hal Marvin had written that the fight was on. Well, let it go on then!

So Yank grinned into the expectant faces of his classmates.

"How about throwing him in the swimming pool," he suggested.

They agreed enthusiastically.

"Pick him up," Art Minton directed. "And carry him tenderly."

Protesting feebly and struggling desperately, the unfortunate sophomore was carried down the winding stairway to the basement of the building, while practically the entire freshman class shuffled after him, jesting and laughing, and having the time of their lives.

Once in the pool-room, however, Yank called a momentary halt.

"Take off his coat, pants and shoes," he said. "No need of ruining his clothes."

The freshmen did as bidden, and when finally their captive stood before them in only his socks and underwear, they seized hold of him again, lifted him high above their heads, and sent him hurtling almost to the center of the pool. He fell with a splash, kicking ludicrously; but when he came to the surface again, he swam easily to the edge of the pool and grinned defiantly into the circle of faces above him.

"Throw him in again," someone suggested. "Give him a real dose!"

But Yank shook his head

"No," he said, "he's a good sport. Let him go!"

They did not even wait until the sophomore had dressed himself; but, their purpose accomplished, crowded outside the gymnasium, sent their class yell booming across the campus,

and then rushed pell-mell for their belated dinner in the dining hall.

Peanut Putnam, in spite of the fact that he had seemingly taken his election to the baseball captaincy in the light of a joke, was nevertheless frankly pleased over the action of his classmates.

"You know, Yank," he said that afternoon, "I haven't done so very much at college except to be on the swimming team; and this will be sort of a good way to end the freshman year. We're going to practice on the Commons this afternoon. You're coming out, aren't you?"

Yank nodded.

"Yes," he answered, "you can count on me as a candidate for pitcher."

Peanut nodded indifferently.

"If you're coming out for that position," he answered, "I suppose you'll get it, and that's about all there is to it."

In view of Yank's record in football, basketball and track, it seemed hardly probable that

any other member of the freshman class could possibly beat him out for the place.

"As far as past records go," Art Minton declared, "Yank ought to be good enough to pitch on the varsity. He's the most natural athlete we ever had at Belmont."

The other candidates apparently agreed with him, with the single exception of a tall, raw-boned boy named George Scranton. Scranton lived in the south end of the dormitory and had never taken part in any of the college activities; and when he announced himself as a candidate for pitcher of the freshman team, Peanut Putnam regarded him doubtfully.

"Where did you ever play before?" he asked.

"In high school," the other boy answered quietly. "I was pitcher on the school team for three years."

"Why didn't you go out for the varsity?"

Scranton's face reddened, but his eyes looked into Peanut's defiantly.

"I did," he answered, "but after the first two

weeks the coach told me that I didn't have much of a chance to make it, so I quit."

Peanut frowned.

"You'll never get anywhere by quitting," he said shortly, "but if you want to try for the team, we'll be glad to have you."

Scranton nodded, and his lips were set determinedly.

"It's the only chance I've got to do anything in college this year," he said, "and I'm going to give everything that I have to this freshman team."

Peanut, his eyes suddenly somber, turned to Yank Brown, who was standing nearby.

"Yank," he said wonderingly, "I think the poor boob really takes this thing seriously. What do you say?"

Yank smiled, but his eyes, too, were questioning.

"We'll give him a chance, Peanut," he answered, "and if you think he can beat the sophomores, it's up to you to put him in the box." For a moment, he was silent, and then impul-

sively he laid a hand on his chum's shoulder. "In a case like this, Peanut," he said quietly, "friendship doesn't count. It is the team and the class that matters."

Peanut nodded.

"Yes," he agreed quietly, "the class comes first."

CHAPTER III

THE PITCHER

TWENTY-FIVE freshman candidates had reported for practice, and Peanut Putnam realized, before the afternoon was well under way, that his job of selecting a team to play against the sophomores was not going to be an easy one by any means.

Outside of the two classes directly concerned, no one cared especially about the game. The interest of the college as a whole was centered on the varsity team and its chances of winning the Commencement game with Steelton, and there was no coach to aid Peanut in selecting his team. The fat boy, however, went about his task in a business-like way; and after an hour or more of fielding practice, he directed Yank Brown and George Scranton to

take turns in the box and pitch at least eight balls to each candidate.

"It's all right to have a good bunch of fielders," he declared, "but what we need most is a team that can wallop the ball. Let's all see what we can do."

Peanut himself, standing at the receiving end, watched critically as George Scranton began his work of pitching. There was little doubt but that the freshman twirler knew a good deal about the game; he did not have much speed, but he controlled his curves well, and he had an outdrop which caused more than one ambitious freshman to swing mightily against the empty air.

"He's good," Peanut told himself wonderingly, "and Yank will have to go some to beat him."

After Scranton had finished his workout, however, and Yank took his own turn in the box, the freshman captain was forced to admit that he did not know which of the two men was the better pitcher. Yank lacked the var-

ied assortment of curves which Scranton had shown, but he winged the ball across the plate with such speed and precision that even Peanut had a hard time in handling it. The batters, striking desperately, missed time and time again; and although Yank tired a bit toward the end, he still maintained his effectiveness and came through the test with flying colors.

"Some pitcher, Yank," Art Minton declared, when Peanut had announced that practice was over. "Where under the sun did you get all that speed, anyhow?"

Yank shook his head.

"Just between the two of us, Art," he answered, "it's about all I *have* got. But generally, it's been enough to win baseball games."

George Scranton, standing nearby, regarded Yank with questioning eyes.

"That kind of thing might be all right for a few innings," he said. "But it seems to me that the other team will get on to it after a while. What will you do then?"

"The only thing to do in that case," Yank answered readily, "is to change the pace and mix in a few slow ones."

"Yes, I see."

Scranton spoke pleasantly enough, and there was no hint of hostility in his voice; but it seemed to Yank, as he regarded the other boy, that in his fellow freshman's eyes there was a look of determination, almost of appeal. The other candidates had gone down to the campus, and the field was practically deserted.

"I don't suppose that this game means so much to either of you fellows, one way or another," Scranton announced suddenly. "But to me it means a whole lot. If I can pitch against the sophomores, for instance, I can wear my class numerals, and—and I'd like to do that."

Yank nodded.

"Yes," he answered understandingly, "but, of course, the numerals don't stand for very much."

"Maybe not for you fellows who've won your

varsity letter," Scranton contended, "but for us dubs it's a good deal."

Neither Yank nor Peanut answered for a moment; and in the ensuing silence, it occurred to Yank that there must be a number of fellows like George Scranton in Belmont—fellows mostly unknown to the college body, but who nevertheless cherished ambitions of their own to do something in a small way for their college or their class.

"Scranton," Yank said suddenly, "you needn't think for a moment that just because I'm Peanut's room-mate, you won't be given a fair chance to play on the freshman team."

"I don't think that," the other boy answered instantly, "but you're a pretty big man around college, you know, and the fellows will naturally think that you're a better pitcher than I am. Maybe you are, only—" he smiled wistfully—"I sure would like to win my numerals," he finished.

Peanut nodded, but did not commit himself.

"Come out to-morrow," he said, when they

had reached the dormitory steps. "There are three days yet, you know, and it's still a toss-up."

Scranton nodded. "I'll be out all right," he declared.

After he had gone, and Yank and Peanut were in their own room waiting for the supper gong, Yank turned to his chum with dubious eyes.

"I'm half inclined to drop out of baseball and give Scranton his chance," he said quietly. "It means more to him probably than either one of us suspects."

But Peanut only smiled.

"You needn't feel quite so superior about it," he answered chidingly. "For from what I saw this afternoon, Scranton isn't any slouch of a pitcher, and maybe he'll beat you out for the place anyhow."

"I hope he does."

"No matter what you hope," Peanut continued, "it's up to you to keep on trying just as

hard as you can. Unless, of course," he finished, "you really *want* to quit."

For a moment Yank was silent; then:

"What do *you* think, Peanut?" he asked directly. "Have I seemed like a quitter to you?"

The twinkle in the fat boy's eyes suddenly disappeared.

"No," he answered quickly. "Anything but that, Yank."

The two candidates for pitcher on the freshman team were, therefore, both on hand on Wednesday afternoon. Peanut Putnam, after consultation with Yank and Art Minton, had formed a tentative first team. Minton, who was probably the best player on the squad, was assigned to second base, with Doug Fletcher at shortstop, and the rest of the candidates who had formerly played on high school teams. Compared with the Belmont varsity, for instance, the nine was nothing to brag about; but it was a good team as class teams went, and Peanut was strongly hopeful of victory.

"The bunch works well together, Yank," he declared on the way home that afternoon, "and it seems to me as if Hal Marvin is in for a big surprise."

"How about the sophs?" Yank asked. "Are they coming along all right?"

Peanut nodded.

"Yes," he answered, "they had a team last year, of course, when they won the interclass game. Outside of two fellows who have been taken up by the varsity, they've got the same players."

"Who pitches?"

"Hal Marvin. And he's good, too."

Yank smiled. It was rather strange, but ever since he had entered Belmont, Hal Marvin had been his biggest rival. In football and basketball, Yank had come out ahead; and in the various interclass battles, he had also more than held his own. And now, if he should pitch for the freshmen, Hal would again be his big rival. It would be a fitting ending to the year, Yank decided, if he could beat Hal

Marvin again. Suddenly, he turned to Peanut.

"How about Scranton?" he asked. "He was pitching to you again this afternoon, wasn't he?"

"Yes, and he's good. But the fellows seem to want you to go in the box, Yank."

"They haven't anything to say about it, really. The choice of the freshman pitcher is up to you."

"I suppose so." Peanut sighed dismally. "Being captain of a team isn't all that it's cracked up to be," he said.

They were sitting on the porch of the Delta Delta fraternity house, of which they were both members; and as Peanut stared gloomily into the distance, weighed down by the burden of his responsibilities, a tall, thin boy, white of face and hollow-eyed, came out of the front door and joined them.

"What are you two freshmen talking about?" he demanded.

"About our troubles," Peanut answered in-

stantly. Then the old twinkle returned to his eyes. "This sure is a hard life, isn't it, Bill?" he asked.

"Yes." Suddenly the newcomer's eyes grew somber, and when he spoke again, his voice wavered a bit. "Yes," he repeated, "it surely is."

Just for a moment he hesitated, and then, standing up abruptly, he left them without further comment. Peanut glanced after him wonderingly, but it was Yank who spoke.

"You shouldn't have said that, Peanut," he declared quietly. "Bill has been having a pretty hard time of it."

"I didn't think, of course. How long has he been sick?"

"Over six weeks in the hospital," Yank answered. "And if he wasn't a shark in his lessons, he couldn't get through his junior year, either."

Peanut nodded.

"Yes," he answered, "he's had hard luck. And it cost a lot of money, too, I guess."

"Someone told me the other day that he's spent all he had saved up for his senior year. That's probably why he looks so worried."

For a long time, Peanut was silent.

"I've always liked Bill Richardson," he said finally, "and I'd hate to have him leave college." The fat boy's kindly face was lined with sympathy. "When you think of hard luck like that," he said quietly, "our little troubles don't amount to much, do they, Yank?"

"They sure don't."

Peanut stood up. "And I'm going to stop crabbing," he announced. "Come on, let's go over and eat."

The problem of who was going to pitch for the freshmen in the annual game with the sophomores still worried Peanut, however; and after the final practice on the next afternoon was finished, he called the players together and announced the probable line-up. When he came to the pitcher's position, however, he hesitated.

"We'll let that selection wait until just before the game starts," he decided finally. "It will either be Yank Brown or Scranton."

The others nodded carelessly, but Yank, glancing over at George Scranton, noticed that the other boy's eyes were heavy. But he did not say anything, and when the team walked back to the campus, he made no effort to speak to Peanut. Yank knew, though, that to Scranton the coming game was one of paramount importance.

Yank wondered vaguely if his own duty to his class made it necessary for him to accept whatever decision Peanut might make without protest. So far as he himself was concerned, the pitching of the game did not matter much; he had already won his varsity letter in three sports, and he would not wear his class numerals even if he should win them. It would be fun, of course, to match his skill and courage against Hal Marvin again, but even that did not matter much. But with Scranton, for instance——

Yank pondered over the problem all through the evening; and at nine o'clock, with a brief explanation to Peanut that he was going out, he slipped from the study and walked across the dormitory to the room which George Scranton occupied.

He did not know whether the other boy was in or not, so he opened the door gently, and glanced inside. And then, he caught his breath sharply. For at his desk by the window, he discovered the figure of the rival candidate. Scranton was seated on his swivel-chair, but his arms rested on the desk before him, and his face was buried in his arms. In his left hand was a battered baseball glove.

Scranton did not move; and for a long minute, Yank regarded him quietly. Then, without speaking, the freshman president closed the door again and tip-toed down the hall. When finally he reached his own room, his decision had been made.

"Peanut," he announced, without prelimi-

naries, "I want you to do something for me. Will you?"

Peanut glanced up quizzically, but one look at Yank's face told him that the moment was a serious one.

"Yes," he answered quietly. "What is it?"

"I want you to start Scranton in the box for the freshman team to-morrow. I'll be there to relieve him if it's necessary. But I want you to start *him*. Will you?"

For an instant, Peanut hesitated; and then, because he had always stood by Yank Brown in everything that the other boy undertook, he nodded.

"Yes," he answered, "I'll start him."

Yank nodded, and the lines went out of his face.

"Thanks, Peanut," he said.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERCLASS GAME

A SURPRISINGLY large number of people journeyed to the baseball field on Friday afternoon to witness the interclass game; but Yank noticed, as he warmed up at one side of the diamond, that the majority of the spectators were members of either the freshman or sophomore class. So far as he was concerned, the game itself was only of minor importance; and had it not been for the fact that he wanted the freshman class to keep its record clear, he would not care very much if they were defeated. For Hal Marvin, captain and pitcher of the rival team, was one of his best college friends; and Yank knew that Hal wanted the victory.

With the majority of the members of the freshman team, however, the game was an event, something to be talked about to the

folks at home during the summer vacation. The majority of the players were from the rank and file of the class, and some of them had not as yet even worn their numerals. They practiced earnestly, their eyes serious and their faces set in lines of determination. It occurred to Yank, as he regarded them curiously, that to their way of thinking, defeat in the impending contest would be almost as much of a tragedy as the losing of the final baseball game with Steelton would be to the varsity nine.

Peanut Putnam, who had been receiving George Scranton's offerings on the other side of the diamond, held up his hand finally and motioned for the team to gather around him. The fat boy took his responsibilities as captain seriously, and when the men had answered his summons, he regarded them with glowing eyes.

"Fellows," he said, "this is the last time we'll play together in any game as a member of the freshman class of Belmont College, and it is up to us to give everything we have for the

victory. We walloped the sophs all through the year, and we mustn't fall down now. Let's go out and win!"

They nodded silently, and waited impatiently while Peanut walked to the center of the diamond and shook hands with Hal Marvin, the rival captain.

With something of a twinkle in his eye, Hal looked at the chubby freshman and grinned broadly.

"Sorry, Peanut, that we'll have to beat the team that you're captain of," he said pleasantly. "But it's one of those things that's simply got to be done."

Peanut grinned back at him.

"I wouldn't be too sure of that, Hal," he answered. "He who laughs last, laughs best, you know."

The umpire, who was a member of the senior class, broke in upon their conversation.

"How about getting started?" he asked. "Both of you fellows ready?"

"Sure," Peanut said.

"Let's go," Hal Marvin answered.

The freshmen, as was the custom, went to bat last; and while their cheering section boomed out the class yell, the members of the first year team took their places in the field. Yank Brown, squatting on the turf near third base, gazed at his fellow classmates with critical eyes. Doug Fletcher and Art Minton, who were experienced athletes, seemed to take the affair naturally enough, but the others were noticeably nervous, as nervous in fact as Yank had been several months before when he was playing his first football game for Belmont. George Scranton, his face pale, took his position in the pitcher's box and threw his practice balls to Peanut Putnam as if the fate of the college depended upon his efforts. Just for a moment, Yank wondered if he had done the right thing in permitting the other boy to start the game.

But Scranton, in spite of his nervousness, proved at once that he had not lost his courage. He was naturally a good pitcher, and even in

the excitement of the moment he did not lose his grip upon himself. When the first sophomore faced him amid the wild plaudits of the crowd, he glanced around deliberately at his infield, took his time winding up, and then sent a slow curve toward the plate which the sophomore missed cleanly. It took only three balls to retire the first batter of the rival team; and Yank Brown knew then that he had done the right thing, that the fortunes of the freshman team were apparently safe in the hands of their pitcher.

The game itself proved to be not greatly different from other interclass contests. Both teams played fairly good ball, but the men, of course, were green and not especially skillful, and there were frequent errors. The freshmen, however, proved to be a harder batting aggregation, and in spite of the good pitching of Hal Marvin, they managed to count four runs in the first five innings. The sophomores pushed a man across the plate in the third, due to errors by the opposing infield; but Scranton

was twirling in masterly fashion, and already the freshmen cohorts were sensing victory.

Yank noticed, as the sixth inning began, that the varsity baseball coach had come over from the other athletic field to view the contest, and it occurred to him that the coach was probably keeping his eyes open for possible varsity material for the next year. That was the kind of thing which made Doc Gordon the good athletic director that he was; he never missed a chance to strengthen the Belmont varsity teams, and his eyes were always open for possible "finds."

In the fifth inning, the freshmen were retired without the semblance of a hit, and when George Scranton took his place in the box, it seemed to Yank as if some of his former nervousness had returned. Possibly it was because he knew that the varsity coach was watching him and because he wanted to show the coach that he himself was not without possibilities as a varsity player. At any rate, he seemed to have a hard time getting the ball over the plate,

and the first sophomore batter was given free transportation to the initial sack. The rival cheering section yelled wildly at that, and a leather-tongued sophomore proclaimed thunderously that Scranton was up in the air and that the "big party" had started. His remarks, made pleasantly enough, but directed entirely at the freshman pitcher, seemed somehow to unnerve George Scranton. He glanced around nervously, attempted to catch the runner off his base, and threw wildly. When finally the ball was retrieved, the man at first had advanced two bases, and an additional run threatened.

Peanut Putnam, alive to the fact that a sophomore rally was imminent, walked out to the pitcher's box and conferred briefly with Scranton. The other boy, however, only shook his head angrily and motioned Peanut back to his place. But on the very next ball pitched, the batter singled neatly to right field, and the score was four to two in favor of the freshmen. The team, however, accepted the mat-

ter stolidly, called out encouragingly to their pitcher and settled determinedly into their positions.

"It is all right, George," Doug Fletcher declared confidently. "We'll catch this man at second base."

That was exactly what they did, and after Peanut's perfect throw which retired the runner, the freshman cheering section breathed in obvious relief and stoutly maintained that it was all over but the shouting. But, in spite of the fact that one man had already been retired and there was no one on base, George Scranton did not regain his control. Yank, watching him, saw him glance questioningly toward the spot where the varsity coach was standing; and when he faced the next batter, his face was still pale and his mouth was twitching. A few minutes later, he made a wild pitch, which Peanut could not even reach with his glove; and, for the second time that inning, a sophomore was given his base on balls. The incident served apparently to dis-

rupt the freshman team, and the next batter knocked an easy grounder to third base which was muffed ingloriously. The man who followed him singled over short stop, and there were three runners on base and only one out.

Yank Brown knew then that only a miracle could keep the sophomores from scoring again; and Peanut evidently thought the same thing, for he turned to Yank excitedly and held up his hand.

“Warm up!” he said.

Yank climbed to his feet and walked across the field away from the diamond, with a substitute catcher. He was glad of the opportunity to get into the game, but he still hoped that Scranton would pull himself together and keep the sophomores from scoring. But although the freshman pitcher made a determined effort and retired the next man by an easy pop fly, he became wild again a short time later and passed the following batter on four pitched balls, forcing across the plate a run

which made the score 4 to 3, with the freshmen still leading.

It was then that Peanut Putnam held up his hand and called for time.

"I'm sorry, George," he said, walking out to the pitcher's box, "but I'm afraid that we'll have to take you out."

The other boy nodded miserably, pulled off his glove and walked disconsolately from his position. Yank, passing him on the edge of the diamond, was conscious of the fact that to Scranton, at least, his removal was nothing short of a tragedy. But he knew also that Scranton had no one but himself to blame; he had been given his chance and had not made good. Still, he had earned his varsity numbers, whether the freshmen won or lost. That honor, at least, was his.

As Yank took his place in the box, the sophomore rooters cheered thunderously in an effort to unnerve him; but even as they sent their yells blooming across the field, they knew that Yank Brown was an experienced athlete, and

that their big chance to win had gone. However, there were still three men on base and they confidently expected at least another run.

Yank, glancing over at them, grinned into their beaming faces and sent the ball like a bullet toward the outstretched glove of Peanut Putnam. The batter, taken by surprise, did not even swing his club, but the umpire held up his right hand and nodded.

"Strike one!" he called.

Yank knew that he was not in a position to try any experiments; the only thing for him to do was to shoot the ball across the plate with all the speed he possessed, and to take his chance on the batter hitting it. But the batsman, even though he was one of the strongest hitters on the sophomore team, felt himself helpless before the new freshman pitcher. Twice in rapid succession, he swung wildly at the ball; and as the third throw thumped thuddingly into Peanut's glove, the freshman cheering section danced happily along the base line and knew that the danger

had passed; for they were still one run in the lead, and Yank Brown, who had never yet failed them, was now the freshman twirler.

There were still three more innings to play, but the members of the freshman team had regained their morale and all their former confidence had returned. Yank Brown, making use of all the speed which he possessed, sent the ball across the plate with such swiftness that the opposing batters could not follow it; and for the remaining three innings they did not make even a semblance of a hit. And even though the freshmen were unable to add to their own score, their one-run lead was all they needed to bring them the victory. As soon as the last sophomore batter was retired, they rushed joyously upon the diamond, seized the protesting Yank Brown and carried him triumphantly around the field. For Yank had kept clean his record against the sophomores, had, for the last time that year, led his followers to a clear-cut victory.

At last, when the excitement had died down

and even the hilarious freshmen had begun to file toward the college dormitory, Yank Brown felt the touch of a hand on his shoulder and turned to find Doc Gordon, the varsity coach, regarding him curiously.

"Why is it, Yank," the older man demanded, "that you didn't come out for the varsity baseball team?"

"The chief reason," Yank answered quietly, "was because I was too busy with track. As I understood the thing, the track team needed me and the baseball team didn't. And anyway," he added modestly, "it was luck more than anything else that won against the sophomores."

The coach, however, shook his head.

"That is the kind of luck," he declared, "that the Belmont varsity baseball team would like to have."

CHAPTER V

THE LAST NIGHT

AN atmosphere of tense expectancy pervaded the college dining hall at supper following the interclass baseball game. Many of the members of the freshman class eyed apprehensively the grinning sophomores at the far side of the room, and more than one of them glanced nervously in the direction of the exits, as if anxious to get away from the hostile environment. It was not because the first year class had won the baseball game that they feared retaliation, but rather because of a college custom which was rooted deeply in the traditions of Belmont. For, on Saturday, the final examinations of the lower classes would begin; and after twelve o'clock Friday night, the freshmen would be immune from further hazing at the hands of the sophomores. But they knew that in the few hours remaining, the

sophs would make a final combined effort to impress upon them the fact that they were still yearlings and that the sophomores had not yet lost their power to make them as miserable as possible.

Peanut Putnam, seated beside Yank at one of the long freshman tables, turned dubiously to his roommate.

"It seems to me," he said, "that if I were you I'd make myself pretty scarce until midnight."

Two or three of the other members of the class nodded in agreement.

"Where are you going to hide?" one of them asked.

But Yank only grinned.

"Leave that to me," he answered quietly. "If the sophs can find me, they're welcome to make me do anything they want to."

Peanut, who knew Yank from past experiences, was satisfied; but some of the other freshmen still glanced doubtfully in the direction of their president.

"You know that they'll be after you, don't you?" Art Minton asked.

Again Yank nodded; but he did not commit himself, and the table relapsed into silence. It was going to be a hard night for the freshmen—there was no doubt of that. For, according to custom, some time after eight o'clock the sophomores would advance upon the dormitory in a body with two distinct purposes in mind. The first was the capturing of the freshman president. If they could once get hold of Yank Brown, they would take him down to the main room on the ground floor, would make him sing and dance for at least an hour. It was a rule of the college that Yank could not leave the dormitory during that final night, and that, if he concealed himself, he must do it somewhere in the confines of the dorm.

But the humiliation of the freshman leader was not the sophomores' only object; for when they made their attack, each one of them would have in his possession a four-foot rope with which he would tie up, if he were able, what-

ever member of the freshman class he happened to come upon. The freshmen, of course, were expected to fight back and, if possible, to turn the tables on their sophomore rivals. In any event, the night was bound to be a big one, one of the most exciting of the entire year.

Yank Brown, having finished his supper, walked unguarded out of the side entrance of the dining hall. But he was aware, nevertheless, of the hostile glances of his sophomore rivals and of the look of expectancy in their eyes. Hal Marvin, sitting at the head of the sophomore table, nodded to Yank pleasantly, but there was something about him that told Yank that Hal was looking upon the coming battle as his final chance to get even with the freshman leader.

Yank realized that in the approaching contest the odds were all in favor of Hal. For even though the dormitory was an old one and there were numerous places in which to hide, all of them were more or less known to the undergraduates; and for the past two years,

the freshman presidents had been captured without much difficulty.

But Yank did not seem to be worried, and when he reached his room he sat down at his desk near the window and gazed indifferently out upon the darkening campus. Peanut, his fat face anxious, regarded his chum with dubious eyes. For a long time he was silent, but finally he could restrain his impatience no longer.

"What are you going to do, Yank?" he asked. "You don't intend to let them capture you, do you?"

Yank shook his head.

"No," he answered, "but I've got a plan, Peanut, which I think will fool them."

But he did not offer to explain; and Peanut, because he knew that his chum was in the habit of looking out for himself, did not ask him further about it. But still he was not entirely assured.

"You might hike up to the attic," he suggested, "and climb up on top of the rafters.

It's dark up there, and maybe if you find a good place they won't be able to get you."

But Yank did not answer, and Peanut relapsed again into silence. It was only slightly after seven o'clock, and both boys knew that the sophomores would not come until darkness set in. They knew, too, that the rules of the game did not permit the sophomores to spy upon Yank until the actual conflict started. Peanut expected his room-mate to leave their study and make his way to some inaccessible part of the building; and for almost an hour waited expectantly. But Yank made no move to go out, simply sat at his desk without comment; until finally the worried look returned to Peanut's eyes, and he began to walk up and down across the floor until Yank looked over at him frowningly.

"What's the big idea, Peanut?" the freshman president demanded. "You're as nervous as a cat."

"Why wouldn't I be?" Peanut answered impatiently. "You know the sophomores are

coming to get you almost any time now, and all you're doing is sitting here in the room and waiting for them."

"Yes," Yank answered quietly, "that's about all I'm doing, Peanut."

From somewhere across the campus came the sound of long cheering; and Peanut rushed to the window, leaned upon the sill and looked out.

"It's the sophs," he announced excitedly, "and they're coming to get you. You'd better beat it."

But Yank did not move from his chair, only sat quietly listening to the approaching sophomore horde.

"How about it," Peanut asked excitedly, "aren't you going to beat it?"

"No," Yank said. Then he swung around. "Turn out the light," he commanded.

Peanut switched off the light, leaving the room in darkness. It was a cloudy night, and the campus itself was enveloped in blackness; but Peanut knew that it would make no dif-

ference so far as Yank was concerned, for the rules required Yank to stay in the building, and as far as his escape went, the campus might as well have been as light as day.

The members of the sophomore class reached the steps of the dormitory. They gathered around their leader and sent their class yell thundering out upon the silence of the night. The four-score freshmen who lived in the dormitory stirred restlessly in their chairs, and some of them walked over to the doors of their room to see if they were securely bolted. But they knew that according to the rules those locks would have to be unlatched as soon as a sophomore gave the summons.

The tramp of many feet sounded in the corridors of the building, and the rival forces began to mount the stairs. Peanut walked over to the window and looked out, but he could not see anything, and then, suddenly, from the floor below them came the roar of many voices.

"We want Yank Brown!" someone called hoarsely, "We want Yank Brown!"

In the darkness of the room there came a sound which closely resembled a snort.

"You're going to get him," Peanut remarked disgustedly. "He's right here, waiting for you."

But Yank, rising from his chair at last, laid his hand upon the fat boy's shoulder.

"Chum," he whispered, "when they come here, you tell them I've gone out, will you?"

"Yes," Peanut answered. "But——"

"I'm going now," Yank said. Turning, he walked quickly to the window and climbed upon the sill. "Peanut," he said softly, "there's a ledge outside our window about two feet wide, and just a few feet away there's a water pipe which I can hold on to. As soon as I get out, I want you to shut the screen and leave things to me. Do you get the point?"

Peanut's eyes widened with sudden understanding, and he nodded excitedly.

"They'll never think to look for you there in a thousand years," he whispered huskily. "They can't kick at all about it, either, for as

long as you're there, you won't be leaving the dormitory."

Without further word, Yank threw up the screen, climbed out upon the ledge and edged his way along carefully until he reached the water pipe. Because of the darkness of the night, he knew that no stray sophomore could see him from the campus, and he was fairly certain that none of those in the building would suspect his hiding-place. It was his purpose to return to his room as soon as the sophomores had searched it, for he was fairly sure that if they once looked for him there, they would not come back again.

Peanut, slamming down the screen, seated himself at Yank's desk and waited for the inevitable summons of the sophomores. It came in less than a minute; and at the commanding knock upon the door, Peanut grinned into the darkness.

"Come in!" he said.

The door opened and at least a dozen sophomores rushed into the room.

"Turn on the light," one of them ordered, "we want Yank Brown."

Peanut, rising deliberately, snapped the switch and the room was enveloped in light.

"You're welcome to him if you can find him," he announced smilingly. "But Yank doesn't happen to be here. He's gone out."

Hal Marvin, leader of the sophomore group, looked searchingly around.

"He's hiding somewhere, fellows," he declared. "But the first thing to do is to search this room, and then if we can't find him, we'll lock the door and take Peanut with us."

They hunted thoroughly, looking under the beds, in the closets, and in every possible hiding place, but they were forced to admit, after five minutes of desperate hunting, that what Peanut said was true; Yank Brown was not there.

For a moment, Hal Marvin stood indecisively, and then turned to his cohorts.

"Half of you fellows go up into the attic," he commanded, "and take a flashlight with

you. If he's there, you've simply *got* to find him. The rest of us will go down to the cellar and see if we can find him there."

They turned to go, and Peanut, watching them, thought for a moment that he himself might possibly escape; so he waited quietly, making himself as inconspicuous as possible, his heart beating high with hope. But just before he reached the door, Hal Marvin turned.

"How about Peanut?" he asked. "What shall we do with him?"

"Let's take him down the hall a bit and turn him over to some of the other sophomores," one of the group suggested. "They can tie him up then and put him in the store-room."

But the task proved to be not quite so easy as the sophomore imagined, for no sooner had Peanut gotten out of the room and slammed the door after him than he broke away from the restraining hands of two of his captors and made a wild dash down the corridor.

"Freshmen this way!" he called shrilly. "All freshmen this way!"

In a moment the building was in an uproar. The freshmen were slightly outnumbered, but they knew that their only salvation lay in making as good a fight as they were able; and, at Peanut's rousing cry, they poured out of their rooms, pounced upon the waiting sophomores, and began the battle which was to last well into the night. Back and forth, down the corridors of the building, the battle raged, and through it all, the search for Yank Brown, president of the freshman class, continued.

And in the meantime, Peanut Putnam was having troubles of his own.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIVALRY ENDS

PEANUT had been in class rushes before, but never in his varied experiences as a freshman in Belmont College had he taken part in such a grand and glorious "rough-house" as the affair that night proved to be.

No sooner had he pealed out his rallying cry to his fellow classmates, than seemingly a score of sophomores pounced upon him and forced him to the floor of the hallway. Two men sat on his legs; and Peanut decided, after a vain attempt to move the imprisoned members, that each of his captives weighed at least three hundred pounds. Other sophomores held his arms, while still others lay prone across his chest, so that he was as helpless as if enclosed in a strait-jacket.

"Gee!" he panted. "Have a heart, you fellows, have a heart!"

Had it not been for the fact that his own battle-cry had aroused the freshmen residents of the dormitory to a fighting pitch, Peanut would surely have suffered the indignity of being bound hand and foot by the sophomores. For in spite of his struggles, a rope had already been drawn around his arms, when the first of the freshman rescuing party arrived, and the fat boy was temporarily free.

And then began a battle such as even the old dormitory had never known. There was no striking, of course, just a gigantic wrestling match with at least half a hundred boys on each side. Up and down the corridors of the building the battle raged, with no distinct advantage on either side; and as time wore on, contesting parties spread out, until on every floor and even in the basement small groups of scantily-clad students tugged and pulled desperately, while the dormitory vibrated with the different class yells, and the

college watchman, on the far side of the campus, heard the sound of desperate conflict and smiled knowingly at a neighboring lamp-post.

And during it all, Peanut Putnam was in his element. Naturally lazy and of peaceful disposition, Peanut when aroused could hold his own with almost any man in college; and in a wrestling match especially, his weight gave him a decided advantage. In the absence of Yank Brown, Peanut became the leader of the freshman fighters. Time and again, when it seemed certain that one of his classmates would be tied up by the opposing forces, a veritable whirlwind of flesh and muscle pounced upon the unsuspecting sophs, hurled them right and left and freed their struggling captive.

Peanut did not trouble himself with trying to tie up any of the members of the rival class. His was the rôle of rescuer, and he did yeoman service at it. Roaming along the corridors of the building, with his coat off and his shirt torn into shreds, he plunged into each

succeeding conflict with fire in his eye and the spirit of victory strong within him.

But in spite of Peanut's most strenuous efforts, the sophomores gradually began to assume the upper hand. For a time, when more than a score of the second year men were engaged in an unsuccessful search for Yank Brown, the freshmen more than held their own; but finally, when Hal Marvin, having scoured the dormitory, admitted that Yank had probably "put one over on them again," the searching parties joined the main battle and turned the tide against their opponents. With still a half hour to go before midnight, they had tied up a half dozen freshmen and had deposited them in one of the corner rooms, with the door locked and three guards to watch over them. And then Peanut, hearing of the indignity which some of his classmates were suffering, decided upon a rescuing party all of his own.

Meeting Doug Fletcher and Art Minton in

the hallway, he accosted them with shining eyes.

"Fellows," he said, "they've got some of our bunch tied up on the third floor of the dorm. The door is locked, I think, but there's a transom above the door, and I think one of us can get through it. Come on!"

As luck would have it, the room was unguarded on the outside, the men who had been assigned to that duty having been called down the corridor to aid one of their comrades in distress. The three freshmen, arriving on the scene, banged upon the door and were greeted with shrill calls for help by their imprisoned classmates.

"They're inside all right," Peanut declared huskily. "Lift me up, you fellows; I'm going through the transom."

Just for a moment the two other boys hesitated.

"Think you can make it?" Doug Fletcher asked. "It isn't very wide, you know."



The sophomore crowded into the room and repeated the process with Peanut's arms.

Peanut glanced speculatively at the narrow opening.

"Yes," he answered excitedly, "I can get through. Hurry up!"

With much grunting and straining, they lifted him until he could grasp the edge of the transom with his fingers. Then, with a final heave, they sought to boost him through.

But something went wrong. Peanut must have imagined himself a good deal smaller than he was, for when he was halfway through the opening, he found, unexpectedly, that he could not go any further. Doug and Art, hearing the sound of approaching sophomores who were rushing in their direction, gave Peanut a last desperate shove; and at the same time the three boys inside the room seized hold of his arms and pulled with all their might and main. It resulted, naturally, in the fat freshman being wedged securely in the opening, with his head inside the room and his legs protruding into the hallway. And just at that

moment, at least a half dozen sophomores arrived on the scene.

It took only a few minutes to overpower Peanut's two companions, and then, while five of the sophomores kept guard over Doug and Art, the others turned their attention to Peanut.

"What shall we do with him?" Hal Marvin asked.

"Paddle him," someone answered instantly. "Paddle the hide off of him."

There was no doubt of the fact that Peanut was well situated for a paddling. But Hal Marvin shook his head.

"No," he answered, "that isn't in the game. But we'd better tie him up, I think."

"Sure, let's go to it!"

Peanut, in spite of his frantic kicking, found his legs seized from below, felt the hateful rope drawn around them and tied securely. Then, after Hal had unlocked the door, the sophomores crowded into the room and repeated the process with Peanut's arms.

"Gee!" Peanut panted. "For the love of Mike, what do you think this is, anyhow?"

The sophomore president regarded him grinningly.

"Here's one time at least that you're in wrong, Peanut," he said. "Feeling pretty comfortable?"

Peanut, like the good sport that he was, grinned back, although rather painfully.

"You sure got me where you want me now," he answered.

Hal regarded him doubtfully.

"I suppose," he suggested finally, "that we'd better pull him through and lock him in the room."

But the other sophomores protested bitterly. Peanut was just as securely imprisoned as if he were in a county jail; and his position was too unusual, too ludicrous to permit any change.

"Leave him where he is," the others argued. "He's all right, aren't you, Peanut?"

Peanut smiled painfully.

"I'm in what you'd call a tight squeeze," he said.

Suddenly, Hal Marvin looked up.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Peanut," he said. "You let us know where Yank is, and we'll release you."

But Peanut only winked.

"Why not go and find him?" he retorted. "He can't leave the dormitory, you know."

"And you won't squeal?"

"You just bet I won't."

Hal smiled

"I didn't expect you to," he declared. "Still——"

From somewhere downstairs the sound of fighting ceased, to be followed a moment later by a concerted yell by the sophomore class. Hal Marvin glanced at his watch.

"Twelve o'clock, fellows," he announced. "The scrap is all over."

"And we're not freshmen any more," Peanut added. "But for goodness' sakes, let me down!"

They took their time about it, however, arguing with mock seriousness whether they should pull him into the room or the hall.

"He's just a little bit farther in than he is out," one of the sophs declared. "I move that we pull him in all the way."

"But still he has the widest part of him to pull through," Hal answered. "We ought to try his feet."

"Whatever you do, do it soon," Peanut groaned. "I feel like a canned sardine."

"We've got to do it eventually, why not now?" Hal asked his classmates. "How about it?"

They decided finally to pull him into the hallway, and with many groans of protest Peanut was at last dislodged from position. He struck the floor with a thud, rose to a sitting position, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"That," he said with dignity, "was surely a glorious ending to my freshman year. Some day, I'll be telling my grandchildren about it."

"And in the meantime," Hal added, "now that everything is all over, you might tell us where Yank is."

For a moment Peanut hesitated, while he leered mockingly into the curious faces of the sophomores.

"I'm very much afraid that I don't know," he answered. "But perhaps, if you come with me, we might find him."

The whole crowd, which had swelled to half a hundred, followed Peanut down the hall until he reached the door of his room.

"I think," he said, turning to Hal, "that you have the key. Let's see it."

The sophomore president handed over the key, and Peanut opened the door. Then, while the others crowded into the entrance, he switched on the light. But the study was vacant.

"He isn't here," Hal Marvin announced wonderingly. "He must still be hiding."

"Maybe he is, and maybe he isn't," Peanut answered. Then, while they watched, he

walked across the floor to the door which opened into Yank's bedroom. "Maybe now we'll solve the mystery," he said.

He turned on the light in the smaller room and glanced over at the bed. And as he did so, there was a murmur of protest from beneath the sheets, and Yank Brown looked up.

"Hello, you fellows!" he said blinking. "Anything I can do for you?"

Hal Marvin, standing in the doorway, regarded him with wondering eyes.

"How under the sun did you get here, Yank?" he asked

The freshman president looked wise.

"I came here just a little while after you fellows left and locked the door," he said. "And I think I've been asleep."

"But how did you get in, if the door was locked?" Hal demanded.

Again Yank grinned.

"In the window," he answered.

"But where were you?" Hal persisted, "you didn't leave the dorm did you?"

"No," Peanut put in, "the only difference was that he was outside the dorm instead of inside."

"But where?"

"On the ledge just outside the window," Yank explained. "I figured that you fellows wouldn't think to look there."

"And you figured right." For a moment Hal Marvin was silent, then he crossed the room and seated himself on the edge of the bed. "I thought perhaps we could even things up this time, Yank, and put one over on you," he declared. "But I see now that it can't be done."

"And we'll hand it to you for fooling us," another of the sophomores added.

Yank smiled.

"Well, Hal," he answered, "it's after midnight now, and that freshman-sophomore stuff is all over. How about shaking on it?"

They shook hands, firmly and grippingly, as befitted two close friends.

"And now," Hal said soberly, "our rivalry

is at an end. But it's been a lot of fun, hasn't it, Yank?"

The other boy nodded.

"It sure has," he said.

And then, for no apparent reason, the two class presidents shook hands again.

CHAPTER VII

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

COLLEGE settled down to a routine of work and play. The examinations for underclassmen had begun, and there was little time for anything but study, especially for those students who had neglected to prepare themselves for the tests. To Yank Brown, however, it was probably the most pleasant period of his college year. Although he had not given so much time to his lessons as he would have done had his athletics permitted, he had never-the-less kept up in his work, and he was in no danger of failing. And so, he found that he had a lot of time to himself, for he was not scheduled to take more than one examination a day; and the remaining hours were his own.

He formed the habit, somehow, of haunt-

ing the athletic field. Possibly it was because that field had been the scene of so many of the incidents of his college course, and he was naturally drawn toward it. But at any rate, while Peanut was busily engaged in studying, Yank walked up to the field on Monday afternoon and watched curiously as the members of the baseball team entered upon their final week of practice.

The baseball season had been a successful one, with only three defeats in fourteen games; but Yank knew that unless Belmont won the final contest with Steelton, which was scheduled for the coming Saturday, the other victories would hardly count at all.

It looked very much, too, as if Belmont was going to win. The infield was composed entirely of veterans, and there was a hard hitting trio in the outfield who had performed well throughout the season. And in the pitcher's box, a senior by the name of Phil Rollins was the acknowledged star of the team.

Phil, rumor had it, had received an offer

from one of the minor league teams to play professional baseball the coming year; but the crack pitcher had neither denied nor confirmed the report, and the college did not know whether it was true or not. The majority of the students, however, were fairly confident that Rollins would not accept the offer, for it was well known that his father was a big business man in Pittsburg and that Phil would go into his firm directly upon graduation.

It did not matter, however, *what* he did, so long as he could win the final game against Steelton. Belmont needed him particularly in that contest, for there was only one good substitute, Ted Wright, and he was not considered strong enough to pitch an entire game. Yank Brown, sitting on the players' bench, discovered Wright himself crouching beside him.

"How about it, Ted?" he asked, more for something to say than for any other reason. "Think you'll get in on Saturday?"

But the second string pitcher shook his head.

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"Not a chance in the world," he answered. "Phil's going great guns just now, and with him at his best, we won't need anyone else."

"How about Steelton?" Yank asked. "Is their pitcher any good?"

"Pretty fair. He's got a lot of speed, I understand, but not many curves." Wright's face darkened. "We're just a little weak on hitting fast balls," he added.

Yank, glancing up, noticed that Doc Gordon, the coach, was looking over at him speculatively; and after a time, the older man left his place near first base and walked across to the bench.

"Hello, Yank," he said carelessly. "How are the exams going?"

"All right, sir. I have one to-morrow morning, but I can kill it, I guess."

"Won't have to study much this week then?"

"No, sir."

"Humph!" For a moment, the varsity coach was silent, then: "I wonder if you'd mind put-

ting on a suit to-morrow," he suggested, "and pitching to the team in practice."

Surprised, Yank looked up questioningly.

"I'd like to do it," he answered instantly. "But—but why do you want me?"

"Because I think you can help us. The Steelton pitcher has a fast ball which I'm afraid is going to bother us; and as I remember the interclass game last Friday, you have a pretty speedy delivery yourself. If you can come out and pitch to the team, it will get them used to speed. See the point?"

Yank nodded.

"Yes," he said, "when do you want me?"

"To-morrow, at four o'clock."

"I'll be here."

"Good!"

Yank, although he did not care quite so much for baseball as for some other sports, was pleased at the invitation, never-the-less. He was so accustomed to taking part in some kind of athletics that he had already begun to feel lost on the substitute's bench. There was, of

course, only a little more than a week of college remaining, but if he could get some baseball in during that week, and help out the varsity team in addition, he was glad of it.

"I can have a lot of fun out of it," he told Peanut that night. "But the team will probably knock me all over the lot."

But Peanut did not seem quite so sure of that.

"I've been watching Ted Wright pitch," he answered, "and it looks to me as if you've got it on him in a hundred ways." Suddenly he paused. "Maybe Doc Gordon thinks so too," he suggested, "and he's keeping you in shape so that if anything happens to Rollins, he can put you in."

But Yank shook his head.

"Nonsense!" he said.

"And if you *should* play baseball," Peanut continued, unmindful of the interruption, "it would mean that you'd win your varsity letter in *five* sports, football, basketball, cross-country, track, and baseball. Gee!"

"There isn't any chance for that," Yank answered shortly.

"But if you *should*," Peanut maintained, "you'd be the only man in Belmont who has ever done it. And if I were you, I'd pitch my old head off to-morrow."

Yank was resolved to give the best that he had, but not for the reason that Peanut mentioned. It was the team which counted more than himself, he argued, and if he could help the team by giving them practice in hitting a fast ball, then he would serve them up with all the strength and skill that he possessed. It would be great to win a baseball letter, of course, but there was no chance of that. Still——

Yank was on the field before four o'clock the next afternoon; and while he warmed up with a substitute catcher, Coach Gordon stood behind him and watched his delivery with critical eyes.

"That's enough to get the kinks out of your arm, Yank," the older man said finally. "I'd

like to have had you all season, though," he added.

The members of the varsity team greeted Yank jovially, asked him if he thought they were a bunch of "blooming sophomores," and dared him to "put one over the pan." The freshman president, realizing that it was all in fun and just the kind of thing needed to keep the men in the right mental attitude, answered chidingly, accepted the challenge and whizzed one over the plate, while Captain Ben Winslow stood waiting. Possibly Winslow was a bit unprepared; but at any rate, he swung desperately and succeeded in hitting only the empty air.

Yank was not quite so successful with the other players, but he was, never-the-less, able to give them just the kind of batting practice that they needed. And when he had finished, Coach Gordon patted him gratefully on the shoulder and asked him if he would come out again on Thursday afternoon.

"I don't think that the Steelton pitcher has

a single thing on you when it comes to a question of speed," he said. "And now that our men are beginning to know how to judge a fast ball, we'll have just twice as good a chance to win on Saturday. That's fine work, Yank."

Without answering, Yank followed the members of the team down to the college gymnasium. The leisure hours which he had looked forward to during that last week in college had not materialized, but they had been replaced by something much more worthwhile. For Yank felt that he was once more fighting for Belmont, working for a varsity team to accomplish its one chief object—a victory over Steelton. And even though he knew that he would receive little credit from the student body, that he would not be able to win his "B" in baseball, he would at least have the satisfaction of having served his college to the best of his ability.

The members of the baseball team accepted him immediately as one of them, just as if he had been with them throughout the season.

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And they included him unquestioningly in their excited conversation about the approaching game.

"According to all the dope," Ben Winslow announced, "we ought to win from Steelton by at least two runs."

The others nodded, but Yank noticed that big Budd Groton, the first baseman, frowned openly. Once, he opened his mouth to say something, caught himself, and relapsed into a thoughtful silence. But just before the squad started to leave the room, he held up his hand and asked the players to wait a minute.

"I don't know whether you fellows have heard anything or not," he said quietly, "and maybe I ought to keep still about it. But it has to do with the team, and it seems to me that we all ought to understand the situation."

The members of the squad regarded him curiously.

"What's up?" Ben Winslow asked.

"Last night when I was downtown to the movies," the first baseman continued, "a man

I had never seen before met me just outside the entrance and asked if he could have a talk with me. I was puzzled, of course, but he said something about it being to my advantage, so I consented, and he took me to a back room in the Mansion House. You fellows know where that is, of course."

The others nodded.

"And then," Groton continued, "he told me about a gambling syndicate which had been organized at Steelton and Collegeville. It is composed of about a dozen men who make their living on that kind of thing, and—well, they're betting on Steelton to win the game on Saturday."

The speaker paused, and the members of the Belmont team regarded one another wonderingly.

"How do they get that way?" Ben Winslow demanded.

"I don't know, but at any rate they've got a pool of more than a thousand dollars, and they're offering odds of three to two."

"But why did they tell *you* about it?" someone wanted to know.

"That's where the rub comes," Groton answered. "Some one of their gang must be pretty close to Belmont, for they knew that I am working my way through college and having a pretty hard time to get along. I'm pretty much in debt, you know."

Most of the other players were aware of Groton's financial difficulties, but they had no time for sympathy just then.

"What did he want?" Coach Gordon asked quietly.

"He wanted me to promise to throw the game to Steelton," the first baseman answered. "And he promised me a hundred dollars if I'd do it."

For a moment the room was silent; and then the players stirred restlessly, their faces troubled, their eyes dubious. Nothing like that had ever happened at Belmont.

"What did you tell him?" the team captain asked abruptly.

"I told him," Budd Groton answered, "that if he didn't get out of that room before I counted twenty, I'd knock him into the middle of next week."

"Good!"

Coach Gordon smiled relievedly.

"Men," he said, "this is the first time since I've been at Belmont that such a thing has happened. We all know, of course, that no member of this team will listen to any offer from the gambling syndicate. I can have your word for that, I'm sure."

He scanned the faces of the players before him, and each and every one of them nodded solemnly, with glowing eyes.

"If it were possible," the coach continued, "I would try to run down the gang and have them arrested; but they probably know exactly what they are doing and are taking every precaution. You never saw the man before, did you, Budd?"

The big first baseman shook his head.

"No," he answered.

"And you probably won't see him again." For a moment the coach was silent. "The best thing for us to do is to forget all about the incident," he said finally, "and to center all our attention on winning the game. And we can do that, can't we?"

Again the players nodded.

"You just bet we can," Ben Winslow declared.

"And we'll win on Saturday if only to make the gambling gang lose their money," another of the team added. "We simply *can't* lose after this."

But Yank Brown, sitting quietly in one corner of the room, was gripped with sudden apprehension. He had the feeling, somehow, that something was going to happen before the big game on Saturday.

CHAPTER VIII

A TELEGRAM

AT practice the following day, the team seemed inclined to take the incident of the attempted bribery lightly. Nothing was said about it on the field, and the players entered upon the afternoon's practice with grim determination to get everything possible out of it. There were only three days remaining before the big Steelton game; and although they were fairly confident of victory, they knew that they would have to be at the top of their form to win.

Yank Brown had gone to the field with them, not because he was required to, but simply because he could not stay away. For he felt, somehow, that he was now a part of the baseball team, and there was no telling when the team might need him.

His arm was just a little sore from his efforts during the preceding day, but if the coach had suggested to him that he pitch again to the varsity, he would have been glad to do so. For what did a sore arm matter, he asked himself, with a victory over Steelton at stake? Coach Gordon, taking his place beside Yank near the third base line, regarded the boy questioningly.

"How's the arm?" he inquired casually.

"A little sore," Yank answered. "But if you want me to——"

But Coach Gordon shook his head.

"We're going to have fielding practice mostly to-day," he said, "but to-morrow I want you to serve some fast ones up to them. You can, can't you?"

"Surely."

"Then on Saturday," the older man continued, "the team ought to be able to handle the Steelton pitcher without much trouble. You've helped us out a lot, Yank."

They relapsed into silence, watching criti-

cally as the infield scampered about the diamond.

"They seem to be in good shape," Yank ventured. "I don't think Budd Groton's story bothered them much, do you?"

"I guess not. They know that no member of the team can be approached now, and there doesn't seem to be anything that the gamblers can do."

"And the way I look at it," Yank continued, "they'll play all the harder now that they know there's some dirty work afoot." Suddenly his eyes opened wide. "Do you think Steelton has anything to do with it?" he asked.

The coach shook his head.

"No," he answered instantly. "Steelton's our rival, of course, and each of us would do almost anything to beat the other. But we play cleanly—that's the college way, you know."

Yank nodded. What the older man said was true; college men played to win, whether in baseball, football or other sports, but they were

always above-board and fair in all their dealings.

He did not for a moment believe that the Steelton team had any connection with the attempted bribery; probably they did not know anything about it. But Yank was troubled, never-the-less. To close followers of the game, it seemed as if Belmont had the better chance for victory in the approaching contest; but the gamblers had decided to place their bets upon Steelton, and it seemed to Yank as if they would not do so unless they were fairly certain of winning. It was not logical to presume that the offer to Budd Groton was their only hope; and now that Budd had refused, they undoubtedly had some other plan in mind. But what it was and how they were going to put it through, was a mystery to Yank.

"Perhaps," he told himself hopefully, "they'll give up the whole idea and not try to follow it out."

He heard, though, when he went downtown that night, that some men from out of town

were quartered in the Mansion House and were offering to bet large sums of money on Steelton. He knew then that the gambling gang was still in existence, and it bothered him more than he cared to admit to anyone. So far as he was concerned, he did not believe in betting; and his year at Belmont had shown him that his fellow students, while always loyally supporting their teams, were not in the habit of backing their loyalty with money. That was the kind of thing Belmont men did not do.

But he knew, too, that there were a number of people in Collegeville who were not adverse to betting upon the college team; and it was these people from whom the gamblers hoped to reap their harvest. Yank wondered, as he walked home that evening, if it wouldn't be a good thing to make known the scheme, to warn the public against it. But he decided finally that *that* was Coach Gordon's concern, and that the older man would handle it as he saw fit.

Yank forgot a good deal about the incident

when he went to the field on Thursday afternoon. It was the last batting practice of the year, and those students who were free from examinations crowded into the stands and cheered the team for more than an hour. It was not, of course, quite so tensely exciting as before the last football game; but there was plenty of enthusiasm, never-the-less, and Yank knew that the entire college would be plunged into gloom should Belmont lose.

He gave himself whole-heartedly to the work at hand, however; and while his college mates looked on curiously, he took his place in the pitcher's box and sent swift inshoots and straight balls over the plate, while the varsity batters swung with increasing confidence, and Coach Gordon looked on with a satisfied light in his eyes.

After less than a half hour of work, however, the coach called Yank from the box.

"They've had enough, and so have you," he announced shortly. "How's the arm holding out?"

"All right," Yank answered. "I can keep on for a long time yet, if you want me to."

But Doc Gordon shook his head, and looked thoughtfully out upon the diamond.

"Our big chance of winning against Steelton," he said slowly, "lies in the pitching of Phil Rollins. As far as any of us knows, Phil will be able to last the entire game, and if he doesn't, Ted Wright is surely good for a couple of innings. But if by any accident, something should happen to Phil, then we'd have to start Ted—and I don't think he can last a full game."

"And if he doesn't?" Yank asked curiously.

"If he doesn't," the coach answered, "maybe we'll have to put *you* in."

Yank's eyes opened wide with amazed surprise.

"Surely," he said, "you've got better pitchers than me in college."

But the coach shook his head.

"No," he answered, "we haven't. And if you had been with us all season and given me a chance to develop a couple of curves, maybe

you'd be starting the game Saturday instead of Phil."

For a moment Yank did not answer, then:

"I'm afraid you think I'm better than I am," he said.

The fact that there was a chance, even if it was only a slim one, of his getting in the game Saturday, was the one thing needed to put Yank in the proper frame of mind for the approaching contest. It was almost as if he were a member of the varsity team, were sharing with them all their hopes and aspirations for victory. So he waited around the field on Thursday afternoon until the practice was concluded; and in the gymnasium afterwards he dressed slowly, taking in the gossip of the waning season, listening eagerly to the comments upon Steelton's team, trying to remember some of the things that Phil Rollins had said about the weaknesses of the rival college batters.

Not once during the entire afternoon was mention made of the plan of the gambling syn-

dicade, and Yank decided that the team had wisely determined to forget all about it. But he himself was still vaguely troubled, and in spite of his efforts to throw it off, the feeling remained with him that something was going to happen.

He talked it over with Peanut in their dormitory room that night, but the fat boy was inclined to take the matter lightly.

"They played their one big card when they tried to bribe Budd Groton," he said. "There isn't anything to worry about now."

Peanut was frankly delighted, however, when Yank told him what the coach had said about the Belmont pitching staff.

"Maybe you'll win your varsity letter in baseball, after all," he said. "And if you do, you'll set up a record that no one in Belmont has ever equalled."

"Back in 1912," Yank advised him, "a fellow by the name of Morrison won his letter in football, basketball, track, and baseball. But he's the only four-letter man on the list."

"You're that already," Peanut answered. "But if you get your 'B' in baseball, you'll win *five* letters."

But Yank shook his head. "Not much chance of that," he said.

He could not help getting excited as the day of the game drew nearer, however. Practice on Friday afternoon consisted simply of some work on the field, but the three pitchers loosened up their arms at one side of the diamond, while the coach watched them keenly and finally gave the word for them to stop.

"How goes it?" he asked Phil Rollins.

The star twirler nodded happily.

"The old arm hasn't been better this season," he answered. "Everything's breaking just right."

"Good work! The game depends more or less upon you, you know."

Rollins nodded.

"I can't wait for to-morrow to come," he said.

The confidence of their pitcher was reflected

in the attitude of the team; and in the gymnasium after the practice, the players were in high spirits, their faces beaming, their eyes shining joyously.

"It's all over but the shouting," Skeets Terrill, the catcher, remarked. "With Phil in shape, they simply can't touch him."

The coach, however, warned them against the danger of over-confidence.

"You must remember, men," he said, "that no game is won until the last ball is pitched. I want you to think you are going to win, to *expect* it, in fact; but you know as well as I do that Steelton will fight to the last ditch, and that the least slip on our part may cost us the victory."

They nodded, at that, solemnly, and their lips shut determinedly.

"We're not going to slip," Ben Winslow declared. Then he turned to the team. "We'll report here at three o'clock to-morrow," he said. "And to-night, I want every man to turn in early."

At nine sharp, the individual members of the team were all in their rooms in the dormitory or fraternity houses. Phil Rollins, star pitcher, having finished a letter to his mother, glanced at his watch, yawned sleepily, and turned to his room-mate.

"Think perhaps I'll hit the hay," he said. "To-morrow's a big day, you know."

The other boy nodded, and then, as a knock sounded on the door, whirled frowningly in his chair.

"Come in!" he called.

The eyes of both boys opened wide, however, when a telegraph messenger obeyed the summons.

"Telegram for Rollins," the messenger announced. "For Phillip T. Rollins."

"That's me," the pitcher snapped. "Give it here."

His eyes wide with apprehension, he tore open the flimsy envelope, read it hastily, and then turned with a rather sickly smile to his room-mate.

"It—it's bad news," he said huskily.

The other boy, seizing the message, spread it out before him. Then, his face also went white. For the telegram had been filed at Pittsburg that evening and it was signed by Phil's father.

"Mother suddenly taken seriously ill." (it read) "Come home at once."

For a moment, the room was enveloped in silence. And then the messenger, watching indifferently, shifted the wad of gum in his mouth.

"Any answer?" he asked.

Just for an instant Phil Rollins hesitated before making his decision. Then, seizing pencil and paper, he scribbled off his reply:

"Leaving Collegeville to-night." (he wrote) "Will reach home in the morning."

"Take that down and file it right away," he demanded. Then he turned to his room-mate. "There's a train leaves New York at twelve o'clock," he said quietly, "and if I get off right away I can catch it. I'm going, of course."

The other boy regarded him with questioning eyes.

"How about the baseball game?" he asked hesitatingly.

But Phil had already started to pack his grip.

"In a case like this," he answered miserably, "even the baseball team doesn't count. You get word to Coach Gordon about it and explain to him. I'm going."

Fifteen minutes later, Phil Rollins, the hope of the Belmont team, was on his way to Pittsburg. And the big game of the season was scheduled for the next day.

CHAPTER IX

WORD FROM PITTSBURG

COACH GORDON called the baseball team together for conference at nine o'clock on Saturday morning. He had heard the news from Phil Rollins' room-mate the preceding night but had decided, after word with Ben Winslow, to withhold the story from the players until later.

"It will only make the fellows worry," the team captain had argued, "and there isn't a thing in the world that any of them can do about it."

But most of them had heard of Phil's departure at the breakfast table that morning, for the report had spread quickly around the campus, leaving the student body stunned with the import of it. For hardly a man at Belmont but did not know that the varsity's biggest

hope of winning from Steelton lay in the strong right arm of the star pitcher. And now he was gone, and there was no chance of getting him back again in time for the game.

The team listened quietly to Coach Gordon's announcement, and after he had told them what most of them already knew, they regarded one another with questioning eyes, but without comment. Then Ben Winslow spoke.

"It's mighty hard luck, of course, that Phil should be called away at this time," he said. "But it seems to me that it's up to us to take the setback just as calmly as we can and make the best of it."

The others nodded.

"There's nothing else we *can* do," Skeets Terrill declared. "But it sure *is* hard luck."

"And now," the captain began——

But Yank Brown interrupted him.

"I wonder," he said quietly, "if there isn't something strange about Phil's telegram?"

The other players looked up questioningly, almost suspiciously.

"You don't mean to say that you think Phil isn't square, do you?" Ben Winslow demanded.

"No, I don't think that," Yank answered instantly. "But I wonder if that gambling syndicate hasn't something to do with it."

The same thought may have occurred to some of the other players, but Yank was the first one to voice it.

"Do you mean," the coach asked, "that you suspect that the telegram is a fraud?"

Yank nodded. "Something like that," he answered. "It would be an easy matter for those men to get someone they knew in Pittsburg to send the telegram, or even to send a messenger there just for that purpose. They've got a lot of money on the game, you know."

"They might do that." Coach Gordon spoke thoughtfully. "If only Phil had taken time to come to me with the message, I might have telephoned to Pittsburg and verified it," he said. "But he ran off like a frightened rabbit, and when I heard of it, it was too late to do anything."

"At least, though," Ben Winslow suggested, "we could telephone to Pittsburg now and find out whether the telegram was a hoax or not. How about it?"

The lines of Coach Gordon's lips set tensely.

"I'll do it," he said.

While the team waited restlessly in the main gymnasium, the older man went into the director's office in order to telephone to Phil Rollin's father.

"I don't suppose there's any chance of getting Phil back, if the message should prove to be the work of the gamblers, is there?" Skeets Terrill asked.

"I don't think so," the team captain answered hopelessly. "It's after time now, and he couldn't make it."

"What are we going to do this afternoon?"

"Put Ted Wright in, of course."

The members of the team glanced curiously at the substitute pitcher, who returned their looks without flinching.

"Of course," he said quietly, "I'm not as good as Phil; but I'll do my best, fellows."

Ben Winslow nodded.

"We know you will, Ted," he answered.

The players relapsed into silence, each busy with his own thoughts, while Coach Gordon's absence stretched into long minutes.

"Probably he's having a hard time getting Pittsburg," Ben Winslow declared finally. "I think I'll go in and find how he's making out."

The team captain disappeared in the direction of the gymnasium office, and struck by a sudden impulse, Yank Brown rose from his place and followed. They found the director waiting patiently for his signal from the operator which would tell him that he had finally secured the connection with Phil Rollins' father in the big office in Pittsburg, where the coach hoped to find him. The older man's eyes were troubled, and he did not glance around as the two boys entered the room.

"Having trouble in getting him?" Ben Winslow asked.

The coach nodded.

"It takes time, of course, to put a wire through," he said. The shadow of a frown crossed his face. "I should think," he added, "that Phil should have known better than to rush off the way he did."

"Still you can't blame him," the team captain argued. "As soon as he looked at the telegram, he probably forgot all about the baseball team."

"Yes, but——"

The telephone bell rang loudly, and Coach Gordon took up the receiver eagerly.

"Hello!" he called. "Hello!"

For an instant he waited and then, as a gruff voice answered him, he moved his lips closer to the instrument.

"Is this Mr. Rollins, Philip T. Rollins of Pittsburg?" he demanded.

Evidently the star pitcher's father was on the other end of the wire, for the coach plunged instantly into the story of the telegram. And then, as the man in Pittsburg

answered him, his teeth clicked with a snap.

"One moment," he said. Holding his hand over the telephone, he turned to the two boys. "It's just as we thought," he announced excitedly. "Nothing's the matter with Phil's mother, and the telegram was a fake."

Ben Winslow nodded. "The gambling bunch did it," he said quietly. "That's the reason they're betting their money on Steelton."

Coach Gordon turned again to the instrument.

"It's almost nine-thirty o'clock now," he announced. "Do you think it's at all possible, Mr. Rollins, to get Phil back here by four o'clock this afternoon?"

Ben Winslow and Yank moved closer, so as to hear the reply.

"It isn't possible," the voice at the other end of the wire declared. "No train leaves Pittsburg to-day which can get Phil there in time." For a moment there was silence, and then the voice sounded again. "But if any possible way

offers itself," the star pitcher's father continued, "I will get Phil to Belmont."

The coach was forced to be satisfied with that vague promise, but when he returned to the waiting members of the team, his eyes were heavy with anxiety.

"Fellows," he said quietly, "it's as Yank Brown suggested. The telegram was a fake, and Phil Rollins is now in Pittsburg. There isn't one chance in a thousand of his pitching the game this afternoon."

For a long time no one answered, while the big clock on the wall ticked mockingly and the players regarded one another with troubled glances. But finally Ben Winslow spoke.

"Men," he said quietly, "we're up against it. If we're a bunch of quitters, we'll fall down this afternoon and play so listlessly that Steelton will win without any trouble at all, but if we're a bunch of fighters as Belmont athletes ought to be, we'll go out on the field and play even better than we know how to overcome

the handicap that we're up against. How about it?"

Skeets Terrill, the big catcher, rose to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his pockets. His jaw protruded aggressively.

"We'll show them whether we're quitters or not," he announced.

"We've got a better team than Steelton even without Phil, and we'll lick the tar out of them!"

"That's the way to talk!" said Coach Gordon. "Let's forget this setback and go out and win."

There was something about the way he spoke, something in the steady light in his eyes, that steadied the team, brushed away their doubts and misgivings.

"We'll start Ted Wright in the box," Ben Winslow declared, "and if by any chance Ted doesn't last through the game, we've got Yank Brown to fall back on."

Skeets Terrill turned questioningly to Yank.

"How about your arm?" he demanded. "Is it in good shape?"

Yank smiled. "Yes," he said. "It's all right."

Coach Gordon looked relieved.

"There isn't anything really to worry about, fellows," he declared. "There's more than an even chance that Ted can hold them; but if he doesn't, we all know the stuff that Yank is made of. He won for us against Steelton in football, basketball and track, and, by George, he can do it again in baseball. Can't you, Yank?"

"Yes," Yank said again.

But it was not so much what he said, as the way he said it, that revived the hopes of the team, restored a good deal of their former confidence. For almost an hour they remained in the gymnasium, revising their plans for the game, encouraging one another, working up that high morale which was the one thing essential for victory.

And just as they were ready to depart, to

announce to the college that they were going to win even if Phil Rollins could not be with them, a telegraph boy entered the room and asked for Coach Gordon.

The coach held out his hand.

"Here," he said shortly. "Give me the message."

Tearing open the envelope, he regarded the contents with curious eyes, and then, his face expressive of wonderment and amazed surprise, he turned to the team and read slowly:

"Am starting now from Pittsburg by aeroplane. Barring accidents, we ought to reach the baseball field before four o'clock. Good luck."

It was signed by Phil Rollins.

CHAPTER X

BY AEROPLANE

THE members of the varsity baseball team received the announcement in stunned surprise. For the space of thirty seconds, they were too astounded to say a word; and then Skeets Terrill chuckled and smote the shoulder of the man beside him.

"Read it again," he said to Coach Gordon.

The older man repeated the message, glanced at the time of its filing, and looked up thoughtfully.

"This telegram was sent at 10.20 o'clock," he announced. "It's four or five hundred miles from here to Pittsburg, and an aeroplane going at full speed ought to make close to a hundred miles an hour."

"That means," Ben Winslow put in, "that

Phil can probably get here by four o'clock."

But the coach refused to be too optimistic.

"Travel by aeroplane is a pretty uncertain thing, Ben," he said quietly. "I don't think that we ought to place too much importance on Phil being with us."

"Perhaps not, but there's a *chance* of his coming." The team captain smiled happily. "I wonder how Phil thought of it," he said.

"I'll bet it was his dad who made the arrangement," Skeets Terrill put in. "Old Mr. Rollins has so much money he doesn't know what to do with it."

"It must have cost him at least five hundred bucks to get an aeroplane to come away out here," another of the players declared.

"Whatever it cost him," replied Gordon, "we'll have to hand it to both Phil and his father for real college spirit. That's the kind of thing which makes Belmont the good college that it is."

"And even if Phil doesn't reach here in time," Yank Brown announced, "we'll know that he's

done more than his share toward the victory. We *can't* lose after a thing like that."

It was hard, though, to wait in tense uncertainty until the time of the game should roll around. Report of what Phil Rollins had done spread like wildfire among the undergraduate body, and at the dining-hall at noon speculation was ripe as to Phil's chances of reaching the field in time. But whether he did or not, the whole college was thrilled at the courage he had shown in attempting the trip; and when the meal was finished and the students gathered outside the building to cheer for the baseball team, the first "long yell" was given, not as was the custom for the team captain, but for Phil Rollins, the pitcher who had been tricked into going away but who was trying *his* level best, by means of a modern miracle, to get back again.

Only Peanut Putnam, out of all the undergraduate body, expressed even the semblance of doubt.

"Phil, of course, has done a big thing to-

day," he said, when Yank and some of his friends were gathered in the dormitory room. "But it seems to me that we're going to be disappointed even if he *does* get here."

The others regarded him in frank surprise.

"Why?" Doug Fletcher asked.

"Because," Peanut answered quietly, "Phil won't be in any condition to pitch. He probably didn't sleep a wink last night thinking of the telegram, and even a Christy Mathewson couldn't pitch winning ball on the same day that he took a five hundred mile aeroplane trip."

In the general acclaim which had greeted Phil's message, none of the players had thought of the thing that Peanut suggested. It had probably occurred to Coach Gordon, but the older man had evidently deemed it wise not to say anything to the team which might weaken their confidence in the slightest degree.

"Maybe you're right, Peanut," Hal Marvin answered finally. "When you get right down to it, it *does* look bad for Phil."

"Even though it does," Yank put in, "I wouldn't say anything to the team. They place a lot of faith in Phil, you know."

"We won't say anything, of course," Peanut added. "Probably, we can beat Steelton anyhow."

"And if Phil doesn't come through, it will give you your chance, Yank," Hal suggested. "We'll all be rooting for you every minute."

"I know you will."

Yank, however, would have been perfectly willing to give up his own chance of playing in the game. He was, of course, not unmindful of the honor which would come to him should he get into the Steelton contest; but that, he decided, was only of minor consequence. The one big thing desired was the winning of the game, and everything else paled into insignificance before it.

Walking over to the window, Yank looked out upon the sun-bathed campus. In spite of the importance of the approaching contest, he found himself gazing with interest upon the

scene of activity below him. For the baseball game was the first event in the four-day Commencement program of Belmont, and already hundreds of alumni had poured into town so as to be present at the general festivities.

There was, Yank knew, a meeting of the Alumni Association in the faculty house on the other side of Chapel; and only a few days ago Bill Richardson, the junior, had told him something of the meaning of that meeting. It was an annual gathering which graduates of the college come halfway across the continent to attend; and somehow, as he looked out over the campus, on that Saturday afternoon, Yank Brown received a new conception of the meaning of such a college as Belmont.

"By George!" he said softly, "it isn't only the baseball game that they care about; it's a lot of things, but mostly the old college itself."

Within the room, Peanut Putnam stirred restlessly.

"I should think, Yank," he said, "that your dad would be here this week. He's a Belmont man, you know."

Yank nodded.

"He *would* be here," he answered, "only the family are in California now, to be gone until the first of July."

"Humph!" Peanut arose and stretched luxuriously. "Let's go downstairs and see what we can see," he offered. "There's a lot of mothers and er—*sisters* of the graduates here to-day."

"Peanut's getting to be a regular ladies' man," Doug Fletcher put in. "But let's go down, Yank, it will keep your mind off the game."

For almost a half hour they sat on the stone steps of the dormitory, watching the play of life about them. Members of the senior class, attired in caps and gowns, were invariably accompanied by proud mothers and fathers, sometimes with uncles, aunts and sisters; but always they gave the impression of pride in the college which they were soon to leave. Yank wondered whimsically if the time would ever

come when he too would be ready to graduate from Belmont. It seemed a long way off.

It was almost three o'clock when finally he left the others and walked slowly over to the gymnasium. The other members of the team were there before him, and Yank noticed that they greeted him eagerly, with traces of excitement in the quick, speculative glances which they shot at him. It occurred to him as he put on his uniform that the men were by no means in the right mental attitude for a baseball game. In football all of their nervous energy could be used upon the field of play, but on the diamond such an attitude would tend rather to the making of errors. Yank, himself an experienced athlete, was conscious of no feeling of excitement; his nerves were steady, and he was altogether prepared to meet whatever test he might be called upon to face. But there were two or three of his fellow players who looked as if the strain of the next few hours would be too much for them. They walked about the room, nervously glancing out of the window,

frequently wetting their dry lips, their eyes unnaturally bright. Yank knew, after looking at them speculatively, that Gordon's biggest task lay in quieting their nerves, in impressing upon them the necessity of keeping themselves steady after the game had once begun.

For a long time no one mentioned Phil Rollins and the desperate chance he was taking to serve his Alma Mater. But finally Skeets Terrill walked over to the window and looked long and earnestly at the cloudless blue of the sky.

"Phil ought to be getting here almost any time now," he said.

But Gordon shook his head. "I wouldn't look for him until four o'clock at the earliest," he declared. "But whether Phil comes or not, we're going to start Ted Wright in the box."

The members of the team glanced up at him.

"Why Ted?" Skeets Terrill asked.

"Because," the coach answered, "we'll have to give Phil some time to recover from his trip." For a moment he was silent, as if hesi-

tating about something. "There's a chance, of course," he said finally, "that Phil may not be in shape to go into the box at all. But as soon as he gets here, we'll have him take a shower in the field house and get the trainer to give him a good rub-down. I think after that he'll be in some sort of shape to pitch, for a few innings at least."

The older man spoke confidently enough, but Yank knew, as soon as he had finished, that Peanut Putnam was not the only man on the campus who was doubtful of Phil Rollins' ability to play baseball that afternoon. But the members of the team did not seem to find any cause for worry, and were apparently satisfied to take the coach's words at their face value.

"Fellows," Ben Winslow announced, after they were all dressed and ready to go to the field, "we've been rather up against it for the last few hours, but now the chance has come for us to show the Belmont rooters whether we're quitters or fighters. In baseball no man can play his best game unless he holds his

nerves steady, unless he forgets everything except the game itself and the necessity of doing everything possible to win. You understand that, don't you?"

The members of the team, sitting before him on the long benches of the locker room, growled assent.

"Yes," Skeets Terrill answered, "we'll keep steady, Ben."

"It's the one thing we must do if we're going to beat Steelton," the captain continued. "It's the one thing that will justify ourselves as Belmont men. Now let's get out on the field and give everything that we have for victory."

The stands were crowded almost to capacity when they dashed through the back entrance and trotted slowly toward the diamond. A wild yell from the Belmont rooters greeted them; the three cheer leaders jumped to their places on the running track, raised their megaphones, and gave a brisk command. A moment later a long cheer for the team floated across the field.

That cheer was the only thing needed to crystallize the fighting spirit which Ben Winslow's words in the dressing-room had awakened. The substitutes took their places on the bench, and the regulars trotted to their positions, pounding their bare hands upon their gloves, calling out encouraging words to one another. Coach Gordon, standing at the plate, knocked twisting grounders to the infield, which the men scooped up confidently and sent speeding toward the big mitt of Belmont's first baseman. Their former nervousness had apparently disappeared; they were again the team which had gone through one of the most successful seasons in the history of the college, a team which Steelton regarded with doubtful eyes, a team endued with the spirit of victory.

The two pitchers, Yank Brown and Ted Wright, took their places in back of the player's bench and warmed up slowly for the approaching contest. The heaviest burden would, of course, fall upon Ted, but he had already won his letter in baseball and had more than once

come through the fire of actual combat unscathed. His chief fault lay in the fact that he was not, as a rule, strong enough to last through an entire game; but he was possessed of a good assortment of nerves and his head work was unquestioned. Yank, glancing over at him, had the feeling, somehow, that his fellow twirler would do all that they expected of him, would not fail in the crucial moment which was fast approaching.

After the usual preliminaries, the umpire walked to his place behind the catchers' box, took off his mask, and announced the batteries to the listening stands. Steelton, as the visiting team, was first at bat, and as Ted Wright took his place in the center of the diamond, five thousand spectators settled back to a tense enjoyment of the contest.

In the initial inning, Ted Wright justified the confidence which had been placed in him; for although the Belmont shortstop made a glaring error which gave the Steelton team a man on base with no one out, Ted showed the

stuff that was in him by retiring the next three batters without the semblance of a hit.

For three innings the game was as splendid an exhibition of baseball as any one would care to witness. As was customary in any contest between Belmont and Steelton, the players rose to a supreme height, playing better really than they knew how. And although, in the third inning, a Steelton runner reached third base, the Belmont center fielder retired the side by a remarkable catch near the ground and the count remained even. Again, in the fourth frame, Steelton made a strong bid for victory, but again, when a score threatened, a Belmont fielder saved the day by a sensational running catch. But it seemed to Yank Brown, as he watched eagerly from the bench, that Ted Wright was beginning to weaken, that he was gradually losing his effectiveness.

Coach Gordon evidently thought the same thing, for when the inning was finally completed, he touched Yank lightly upon the shoulder and drew him to one side.

"Yank," he said quietly, "I think that probably we'll have to use you in another inning or two. You'd better go behind the grandstand and warm up."

Yank quietly picked up his glove, and made his way slowly down the field. It looked very much as if he were going to pitch in the final baseball game with Steelton, as if by a strange combination of circumstances he would do that unheard-of thing—be given an opportunity to win his varsity letter five times in one year.

And then, just before he reached the edge of the field, he heard a whirring noise far above him. Glancing up eagerly, he saw circling high over the field and looking like a speck in the distance, a whirling aeroplane. And even as he watched, the plane came nearer the earth, and a great shout arose from the Belmont stands.

Phil Rollins, the star pitcher of the team, their biggest hope of victory, had arrived at last.

CHAPTER XI

THE RELIEF PITCHER

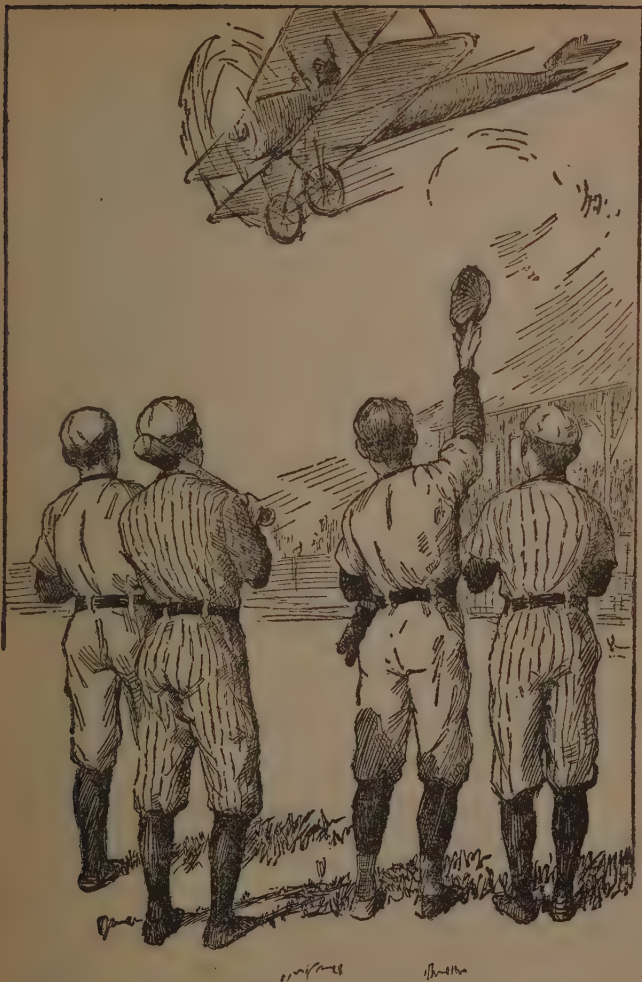
FIVE thousand eager eyes followed the downward flight of the approaching aeroplane. Ben Winslow, rushing out to the umpire, addressed that official excitedly.

"Ump," he asked, "do you mind calling the game for a minute? I think they're going to land here."

The umpire glanced questioningly at the captain of the Steelton team, and because the rival leader was a good sportsman and a clean player, he nodded his consent.

"Sure," he said, "let's hold up for a while."

Wheeling, the official called the players from the field; and when one Steelton outfielder questioned him indignantly as to the cause of his action, he glanced into the boy's anxious eyes.



The plane, circling directly over them, slowed down.

"I think that plane's going to land here," he said, "and you're in danger of getting hit if you stay out there."

With the two teams grouped in front of the stands, they watched curiously while the plane circled nearer and nearer. After a time, they could discern two figures seated in it; and even as they watched, one of the figures leaned out and waved a white handkerchief triumphantly. They knew then that it was Phil Rollins coming to give whatever aid was needed to his fellow players. The whirr of the engine grew more distinct; the plane, circling directly over them, slowed down; and then, so quickly that they hardly realized what had happened, it had made a perfect landing and was bumping crazily along the ground. Finally it came to a stop, and while the spectators cheered wildly, the members of the Belmont team rushed across the diamond. Just as they reached the machine, Phil Rollins, attired in an aviator's suit, climbed out of the cockpit and greeted them smilingly.

"Gee!" he said grinning into their eager faces. "You can't imagine how cold it is up there!"

They plied him with questions, pounded him on the back, threatened to overwhelm him with their congratulations; and through it all, the stands continued their cheering and the field was in an uproar.

But after a time order developed out of chaos, and the umpire, again the masterful force of the game, walked over to where Ben Winslow was standing.

"How about it, Captain?" he asked gruffly. "Time to start up again, isn't it?"

Winslow, nodding briskly, turned to his fellow players.

"All right, men," he said. "The umpire wants us to go on again." Then he addressed Phil Rollins directly. "Phil," he ordered, "go get your suit on. Yank Brown will go into the field house with you and tell you what to do. We may need you any time now, so hurry up."

The star pitcher, walking a bit unsteadily,

followed Yank to the concrete field house near the main entrance. Once inside, he smiled rather feebly and stretched his arms above his head.

"Just now," he said wryly, "I feel as much like playing baseball as a chicken would."

But Yank only laid an arm casually across his shoulders.

"The coach says for you to take a bath and then have the trainer rub you down," he announced. "You'll be a new man after that."

Evidently Coach Gordon's treatment was a good one, for after he had hastily taken off his heavy clothing and had stood for a few minutes under the hot water of the shower, Phil announced himself completely recovered from his arduous trip.

"I can go out right now," he said, "without bothering about anything else. Come on and let's see what's happening."

But the college trainer, who was waiting outside in the main room, vetoed the suggestion.

"Your muscles are bound to be stiff," he de-

clared, "and five minutes more or less wouldn't make any difference at all."

As he lay on the broad rubbing table with the trainer kneading the muscles of his arms, Phil Rollins explained briefly to Yank what had happened.

"I was so worked up with the receipt of the telegram," he said, "that it never occurred to me that the thing might be a fake until I was on the train for Pittsburg. I did think something about it then, but it was too late then to turn back, and the only thing that I could do was to keep on until I found out just what had happened." Suddenly he paused. "I suppose the coach is blaming me, isn't he?" he asked.

But Yank shook his head.

"Nobody's blaming you for anything, Phil," he answered. "You only did what anyone else would have done in the same circumstances."

The other boy looked relieved.

"Anyhow," he said, "I reached Pittsburg shortly after nine o'clock and went right on

home without even telephoning to Dad's office, and when I got there I found Mother sitting on the porch just as well as she had ever been."

"That must have been about the time we were telephoning your father," Yank put in. "What did you do then?"

"I got in touch with Dad right away, and he told me that Coach Gordon had telephoned him from Belmont. We were both pretty much discouraged and were willing to admit that there wasn't any chance of my getting back. And then Dad thought of the aeroplane."

"But how did you get hold of it?" Yank demanded.

"It wasn't half as hard as it might seem," Phil answered. "Dad owns stock in a big aeroplane company outside of Pittsburg, and he happened to know that there was one plane ready for delivery which had been making flying tests all week. So he got in touch with the factory at once, and ordered the aviator to proceed to Belmont with me as a passenger. We got off a little after ten o'clock and came

all the way through with only three stops." For a moment the boy on the rubbing table was silent. "If it wasn't for the fact that I knew I had to pitch as soon as I got here, I would have enjoyed the trip a lot," he announced. "But as it was, I was too worried to think about anything except getting here on time."

Suddenly, as a wild yell from the Steelton rooters swept through the windows of the field house, Phil Rollins leaped to his feet.

"That's enough, Jake," he said sharply to the trainer. "Something's happening out on the field, and I want to see what it is."

Hastily donning his suit, he followed Yank down the stone steps of the porch and trotted out upon the running track bordering the diamond. Steelton was at bat at the time, and the majority of the spectators were excitedly following the progress of the game; but one of the Belmont students finally discovered the two figures coming toward the stands and instantly made known the fact to the cheer lead-

ers. In another moment, a long yell for Phil Rollins rent the air.

It was the fifth inning of the game, and Ted Wright was still in the box for Belmont. But Yank noted in one swift glance that there was a Steelton runner on first and second, and that the Belmont players were crouching fiercely in their places.

"It looks as if Ted is in a bad way," he announced excitedly. "Let's find out, Phil."

But even as they hurried toward the players' bench, the Steelton batter met the ball fairly and sent it on a line toward shortstop. It looked like a sure hit, but an instant later the Belmont infielder leaped desperately into the air, caught the ball with his gloved hand, and held it grippingly. Wheeling, he tossed it with unerring aim to second base. The Belmont stands broke into a torrent of applause. The players tossed their gloves aside and trotted toward the bench. Yank knew then that the danger had passed for that inning at least, that Belmont had still been able to keep

the Steelton team from scoring. The two boys took their places on the bench with their teammates, but Coach Gordon, spying them, walked over to where they were sitting.

"I want both you men to go down the field and warm up," he said quietly. "We may use you later in the game."

He nodded briskly, but before they took their places behind the grandstand, Phil Rollins turned to the others.

"Men," he said quietly, "we haven't been able to get a run yet. Let's see if we can get some this inning. I came all the way from Pittsburg to see this game, and *we're going to win it!*"

Somehow, his words put new life into the Belmont team, caused the players to take a fresh grip on themselves.

"Let's go!" Ben Winslow exhorted. "Men, let's do what Phil says, and win the game right here."

It seemed in that latter half of the fifth inning as if the team could not be denied. The

first man at bat cracked out a neat single over third base, the next man was given free transportation to first, and the player following him laid down a neat sacrifice bunt. Yank was unable to follow all details of play from his position behind the grandstand, but he knew by the wild uproar of the stands that Belmont had scored; and when finally the inning was ended, he stopped his practice for a minute and slipped through the crowd so that he could glimpse the scoreboard. There the figures showed him that Belmont had scored two runs, and that the count was 2 to 0, with only four innings remaining.

Coach Gordon, sighting him, nodded to him to come back to the bench.

"You don't need to go behind the stands again, Yank," he said. "But I do want you just to throw the ball back and forth with one of the substitute catchers. I have a feeling that Ted Wright isn't going to last out this inning; but if he doesn't, we'll put Phil in and hold you as our final reserve."

Yank agreed at once to this.

"Phil was pretty well all in at first," he declared, "but after his shower and rub-down he seemed to be all right and ought to be good for a few innings anyhow."

"Yes," the coach answered shortly, "I think perhaps we can count on him. And, goodness knows," he added, "he deserves his chance."

Evidently Coach Gordon was correct in his opinion of Ted Wright; the substitute pitcher had so far twirled a remarkable game and had done everything that could possibly be expected of him; but Yank, watching him with critical eyes, noted that when he took his place in the box at the beginning of the sixth inning, Ted seemed to have lost some of his confidence. The Belmont players, however, were apparently satisfied with the way the game was progressing, for they took their places confidently and called out encouraging words to their pitcher.

"It's all right!" Skeets Terrill declared loudly. "Let's get the first man, Ted."

The Steelton batter, however, found the ball exactly to his liking and sent it high and far toward the running track in left field. It looked for a moment like a sure triple, almost a home run. But the Belmont fielder, wheeling sharply, ran with all his might toward the direction in which the ball was going, glanced once over his shoulder, raised his arm and, almost by a miracle, knocked down the ball and hurled it back to the diamond quickly enough to hold the runner on second base. It was a sensational piece of fielding, and the Belmont stands yelled their approval; but Coach Gordon, sitting beside Yank, shook his head doubtfully, and glanced toward the spot where Phil Rollins was still warming up.

"It was luck which robbed them of a home run," he said, "and I'm very much afraid that Ted Wright is through."

His prediction proved to be correct, for the next Steelton batsman sent a line drive toward right field, and the man following him beat out an infield grounder, placing three Steelton run-

ners on base, with no one out. Coach Gordon knew then that for a surety Ted Wright was through, and evidently the substitute player knew it also, for he suddenly dropped his hands to his side and glanced appealingly at the bench.

The coach stood up in his place, and spoke briefly to an assistant manager. The manager ran hastily around the stands, passed on the word to Phil Rollins; and Ted Wright, dropping his glove, walked slowly from the pitcher's box.

And then while the crowd cheered uproariously, for both pitchers, Rollins, the star of the Belmont team, the man who had already proved his loyalty without question, trotted hastily out on the diamond and took his place in the box.

CHAPTER XII

TRIBUTE

THERE was something about Phil Rollins that inspired confidence, that gave the players behind him the feeling that, no matter how bad the situation, Phil would pull them through.

There were two men on base and no one out when the Belmont star entered the game. The field was in an uproar, the Steelton stands clamoring loudly for a brace of runs, and the Belmont rooters cheering thunderously at the appearance of the boy who had throughout the season led them to a succession of glorious victories. Phil's dramatic arrival had added a touch of novelty to the occasion, and probably never before in the history of the college had a contest of any kind been played under such unusual circumstances.

Yank Brown, leaning forward eagerly, his elbows on his knees, regarded Phil Rollins almost anxiously. For even though he knew that Phil was not the kind of man to fall down in a pinch, he was not unmindful of the fact that the other boy had labored under a great strain during the past eighteen hours and that it would take courage of the highest type to stand true in the face of this crucial test.

But Phil Rollins was the picture of confidence as he took his position in the center of the diamond. The uproar surrounding him was apparently unnoticed; and if he was at all bothered by the situation in which he found himself, he gave no indication of it.

He nodded easily to Skeets Terrill, turned and smiled assuredly into the excited faces of the infield, fitted on his glove, and picked up the ball casually. Then, while the Steelton batsman stood to one side, he went about his business of throwing a few preliminary balls with a nonchalant air that caused a wave of

admiration to sweep through the watching Yank Brown.

"Phil's *there*," Yank said quietly to Coach Gordon. "He's got more nerve than anyone I've ever seen."

The older man assented. "There's no question of his courage," he answered. "But we must wait and see whether his trip has weakened him or not."

It seemed, however, after the game began again, that the star pitcher was none the worse for his unusual experience. For he was apparently complete master of the situation, and in four pitched balls he retired the Steelton batter by the strike-out route.

Any doubt which the Belmont players or rooters may have had was brushed away by that remarkable exhibition of pitching. The stands, which had been waiting anxiously, burst again into a thunder of applause; and the loyal Steelton followers, more than five hundred strong, relapsed suddenly into apprehensive silence. For they were well aware of the

fact that Belmont's best pitcher was now facing their team, and their hopes of victory, which a short time ago had been raised to a high plane, went tumbling about them, like a house of cards which had been unexpectedly shattered.

But after the first pang of disappointment, they recovered themselves and responded gallantly to their cheer leaders' plea for "a long locomotive." There were still three men on base and only one out, and a single hit was all that was needed for a score.

The leader of the Steelton batting order advanced to the plate, and tapped the ground determinedly with his bat. Phil Rollins looked into his tight-lipped face, wound up slowly, and sent the ball in a wide sweep seemingly directly at him. He dodged quickly, and the ball curved neatly over the pan for a strike. The umpire held up his right hand, and the Belmont rooters roared their approval. For Phil Rollins was possessed of all his usual cunning—and victory was in the air.

On the next ball pitched, however, the batsman swung quickly, met it with a sharp crack, and sent it on a line toward second base. It looked for an instant like a safe hit, but the Belmont pitcher simply threw up his left hand, speared the ball with his glove, and held it. For a moment, he himself was too surprised to do anything but stand in his position; then, realizing the fact that three men were on bases, he turned and threw hurriedly toward second. The runner, however, had profited by that moment of hesitation and had scampered back to the bag. The attempt at a double play failed by inches, but the Belmont rooters did not care particularly about it. For there were now two men out, and the rally of the Steelton team bade fair to be stopped before it was fairly started.

Coach Gordon, his face expressionless, turned casually to Yank.

"That last crack was a hard hit ball," he said, "and it was only by luck that Phil got it. He doesn't seem to be quite himself to me."

Yank did not answer, but he was worried, never-the-less, over what the coach had said. For if Phil Rollins failed them at this juncture, Belmont's chances of victory would probably go a-glimmering.

"Maybe," Yank suggested hopefully, "if he gets out of this inning, he'll be all right for the rest of the game. Things look better than they did, anyhow."

They looked better than ever a moment later; for the Steelton coach, deciding to take a desperate chance in the hope, probably, of demoralizing the Belmont team, ordered a double steal.

Rollins was apparently indifferent to the two men on bases, for on his next delivery he wound up slowly, not even bothering to glance over his shoulder. And at his first motion, the man on second dug his cleats into the ground and dashed desperately for third. It seemed for a moment as if he would surely make it; but Skeets Terrill, awake to the danger, drew back his arm and hurled the ball in a line to the wait-

ing Belmont infielder. The third baseman received the throw almost ankle high, swept his hand around in a swift semi-circle, and tagged the runner as he slid desperately into the bag.

The umpire, rushing to the spot, threw up his arm.

"Out!" he announced.

The Belmont stands leaped to their feet and thundered out a wild yell which must have been heard three miles away. Phil Rollins tossed aside his glove and trotted to the bench. The substitutes leaped from their places, overwhelmed him with congratulations.

"Oh, you Phil!" one of them said.

But Coach Gordon said nothing, and Yank knew that prospects were not quite so bright as they appeared to be. But the members of the team were satisfied, confident that they could hold Steelton scoreless and finish the year with a glorious victory.

Even though they themselves were retired in order in the last half of the sixth, it did not bother them. For they were two runs in the

lead, Phil Rollins was pitching, and there were only three more innings to play.

They trotted out to their positions joyously, tossed the ball about with reckless abandon, told themselves that it was all over but the shouting. And the star pitcher, confidence in every line of his clean-cut face, smiled into their eager faces, and turned easily to the first batter to face him. Things had never looked better for Belmont.

But in that inning, Steelton scored a run. There was no fluke about it, for the Belmont team was fielding flawlessly. The lead-off man, however, cracked out a single to right field; the man following him sacrificed him neatly to second, and the third batter met the ball fairly for the longest hit of the game, a double to deep center. Two hits and a sacrifice in succession, and no one out!

The Belmont stands, suddenly apprehensive, boomed forth their cheers defiantly, but the aspect of the game had suddenly changed. Coach Gordon, sitting motionless upon the

bench, found a match somewhere in his pockets and inserted it between his lips. Yank Brown knew then that he was worried.

A moment later, however, the outlook changed. The Steelton man at bat selected a slow outcurve, took a single step forward, and met the ball fairly. It traveled in a line between first and second; but the Belmont second baseman, without stepping from his position, smothered it without apparent effort. The shortstop dashed to the base, caught the throw from his team-mate and doubled the runner who had left second and had not been able to scamper back. It was as neat a double play as had ever been seen on the college field.

A wild yell of relief went up from the Belmont rooters. Again Steelton had threatened to tie the score, and again their rally had been cut off. Yank Brown, sitting back contentedly, decided then that the visiting team was through. And it seemed as if he were right, for the next batter lifted a high fly to center field which was captured for the final out.

Belmont was still one run in the lead, with two innings to play.

The score remained unchanged in the last half of the seventh, but when the team trotted on the field for the eighth inning, Coach Gordon turned quietly to Yank.

"It looks to me," he said slowly, "as if Phil Rollins has shot his bolt. He didn't have a thing on the ball last inning, and it was only luck that saved him."

Yank glanced back at him. It was true that the Steelton batters had hit everything that Phil had offered and that only sensational fielding had prevented further scoring. But he hoped, against his better judgment, that Phil would find himself in the two remaining innings, would regain his old skill and cunning.

"He *has* to do it!" Yank said softly. "We *can't* lose, after this."

Phil, however, found himself in trouble almost at once. For some reason or other, he could not control his delivery, and the Steelton batter walked. The visiting cheering section

yelled happily, and the Belmont rooters relapsed into anxious waiting. Skeets Terrill, his eyes questioning, walked out to the pitcher's box.

"Never mind that, Phil," he said quietly. "We'll get this man on second."

But the runner had a good deal of respect for Skeet's throwing arm, and did not attempt to steal. He reached second base, however, when the batter following him beat out a slow infield roller; and again the Steelton rooters cheered lustily.

"It's all over now," a leather-lunged student boomed out. "Let's start a merry-go-round!"

There was a momentary relief, however, when the third batter sent up a high foul which Terrill smothered in his big mitt; and a few minutes later the Steelton pitcher knocked out a weak infield grounder and was retired at first.

The followers of the Belmont team breathed more freely then, but their happiness was short-lived, for on Phil's first delivery to the next man, the Steelton player cracked out a

single over third, and only fast fielding prevented another score.

But the game had reached its crisis, and there was no doubt of that. Even the most optimistic of Belmont followers was ready to admit that Phil Rollins had attempted a task that was too much for him. For although Phil was one of the best pitchers that had ever worn a Belmont uniform, he was laboring under a handicap which even a better man than he could not have overcome. His sleepless night on the train to Pittsburg, and the shock of learning that the telegram was a mistake, were in themselves enough to unnerve almost anyone. But in addition to that, Phil had ridden almost five hundred miles in an aeroplane less than an hour before he started to pitch for his team. And when Steelton made its third hit in that eighth inning, Phil admitted that he had failed.

Just for a moment he stood in the pitcher's box, his blue eyes troubled, his mouth twitching nervously. And then, suddenly deter-

mined, he dropped his hands to his sides, turned toward Coach Gordon, and shook his head miserably. And at the sight of his troubled face, the older man rose from the bench.

"All right, Phil," he said quietly, "you have done your best. We'll give Yank his chance now."

The star pitcher of the Belmont baseball team stood motionless for a moment, turned and smiled bravely into the somber eyes of his team-mates, and then, head held high, walked slowly toward the bench. There was no hint of defeat in his attitude, no sign of the wild tumult of emotion which must have seethed within him. He had given the best that he had under difficult circumstances; and had been conquered, not by any fault of his own, but by outside forces over which he had no control.

The Belmont rooters, consisting mostly of students and graduates of the college, were for a moment stunned into silence. And then, because they, too, understood the circum-

stances connected with the game, they suddenly rose to their feet, uncovered their heads, and paid tribute to the courageous player who had gone down fighting. Nothing more splendid had ever been witnessed on the Belmont field; and for a moment before he took his seat upon the bench, Phil stood quietly in front of the shouting stands and drank in his measure of praise. He knew, somehow, that greater glory could not have been his, even if he had won the victory.

And then, when the shouting died down, Yank Brown took his place in the pitcher's box for Belmont.

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF THE GAME

CLEAR-HEADED, realizing fully the responsibility which lay upon his shoulders, Yank picked up the ball which Phil Rollins had dropped, and faced Skeets Terrill, the Belmont catcher. The stands relapsed into silence, waiting——

Yank knew, as he turned to his team-mates and nodded reassuringly, that so far as baseball was concerned, he was an unknown quantity. Hardly a hundred persons upon the crowded stands had any knowledge whatever of his pitching ability; he had never played on the varsity nine before, and his only claim to distinction lay in the fact that he had pitched the freshmen to victory over a sophomore team. But that in itself was but small commendation, for the sophomore players were

admittedly inferior to the men he was now facing.

But, during the past year, the undergraduates of Belmont, and many of the alumni, had witnessed Yank's play upon the football field and basketball court, had learned to know something of his indomitable fighting spirit, his ability to rise to supreme heights when the occasion demanded it. And they realized, too, that if ever the freshman athlete needed all his skill and courage, he needed it now.

Yank himself, trained by long experience upon the athletic field, was wholly awake to the fact that he was facing the biggest crisis of his college career. And even as the importance of the occasion came to him, he realized with a pang of discouragement that he was less strongly fortified to meet this situation than any he had previously faced. Just for a moment he faltered, and then his natural fighting spirit asserted itself.

"All right, fellows," he said evenly. "We'll get the next man."

There were two out, and if only they could retire the batter waiting at the plate, the present danger would be past. After that, there was only one inning—one inning to keep Steelton from scoring.

Skeets Terrill signaled for a fast ball, and Yank nodded. It was the only thing that Skeets *could* signal for, he told himself, for it was all that he had. But Yank had found in his practice against the Belmont varsity that his fast ball was a hard thing to hit; and he resolved, as he wound up for his delivery, that he would put all the speed he possessed into each successive attempt.

The ball was only a white streak as it shot toward the plate. The batter, waiting tensely, saw it coming, swung, and missed it cleanly. The stands cheered.

The Belmont infielders pounded their fists into worn gloves, called out encouragingly, and crouched in their places. Again Yank wound up, and again he streaked the ball over the

plate. And for the second time, the Steelton batter missed.

The Belmont rooters, hardly believing their eyes, stood up in their places and yelled lustily. The eyes of the man at the plate narrowed; he stamped his feet almost angrily, and tightened the grip upon his bat. Skeets Terrill, calling for another fast ball, gestured confidently.

The ball sped again toward the outstretched glove of the catcher. The Steelton player glimpsed it coming, hesitated for a bare instant, and decided to let it pass. It plunked into the big mitt, and Yank held his breath.

And then the umpire threw up his right hand.

"Strike three! You're out!" he called sharply.

Pandemonium broke loose, and the Belmont players danced happily toward the bench. The score was still two to one, and a single inning remained to be played.

Coach Gordon, meeting Yank on the base-

line, dug his fingers grippingly into the boy's shoulder.

"Good work!" he said. "Keep that pitching up, and we'll win."

But Yank shook his head doubtfully.

"I haven't got anything but a fast ball, you know," he answered. "And they might get on to it."

The coach, however, did not think so.

"They probably would in a few innings," he declared. "But none of them have faced you before, and you'll have them buffaloed."

Yank, thinking it over on the bench while his team-mates tried desperately to score another run, decided that the coach was right. He harbored no illusions concerning his pitching, and he knew that in a full game the opposing team would undoubtedly solve his delivery and make trouble for him. But now he had only one inning to pitch, and the odds were all in his favor. His one task lay in shooting the ball over the plate with all the speed that he possessed. That was the only thing that he

could do; and the result lay in the lap of fortune.

It so happened, however, that fortune was kind. The Steelton players, with victory in sight, had found their successive rallies cut short, twice by sheer luck and the third by the remarkable speed of a substitute pitcher. And although they went to bat in the final inning with their determination undaunted, they were never-the-less just a bit discouraged and a good deal demoralized.

They tried desperately in that final frame, seized their bats grippingly, and swung with all the strength of their muscled arms. But the ball came to them with such surprising swiftness that they did not have time to set themselves; and although the second man up managed to send a single over shortstop, his teammates could not support him. And so, with two out and a man on first, Yank faced the final batter.

The stands were cheering wildly, but Yank hardly heard them. All that mattered to him

was the stern necessity of retiring the side without a run, of keeping the player at the plate from hitting the ball. And somehow, by an almost superhuman effort, he succeeded in doing so. Twice the batter swung desperately, and twice he missed. Skeets Terrill pounded his fist into the padded catcher's glove and called out something that Yank could not hear. Strangely, as he prepared to deliver the next ball, the stands relapsed into unexpected silence. And then, Yank's arm arched forward and the ball shot from his hand. The batter leaned backward, waited for an instant, and then swung. But that momentary pause spelled defeat, for when his bat finished its semi-circle, the ball was already nestled in the padded glove of Skeets Terrill.

The Belmont rooters, in the wild exultation of victory, swarmed out upon the field and headed directly for Yank Brown. But Yank, who had seen such things before, whirled quickly, and dashed toward the gate leading to the gymnasium; for somehow, now

that the game was won, he had no desire to be carried around the diamond on the shoulders of his hilarious class-mates. He wanted to get back to the locker room, to get off his baseball uniform, and escape the plaudits of the crowd.

He was already in the shower baths when the other players arrived. They greeted him happily when he joined them, pounded him upon the back, told him that he was "there like a duck." Now that the strain was over, they wondered why it was that they had worried so much about it.

"Oh, boy!" Ben Winslow declared joyfully. "I never thought we'd get away with it in a thousand years."

"And we wouldn't either," Skeets Terrill put in, "if we hadn't had all the breaks of the game."

"We *were* pretty lucky," the team captain agreed. "But we won, and after all, that's the only thing that counts."

"And you deserved to win, too," Coach Gor-

don put in. "If ever a team played under a handicap, we did this afternoon."

They could not dispute this.

"Where's Phil Rollins?" someone asked suddenly.

"He got dressed up at the field house and went over to his fraternity," the coach answered. "His father left for Pittsburg by train this morning and ought to get here by six o'clock."

"What did *he* come for?" Skeets Terrill inquired.

"To find out about the game and, if possible, run down the gambling syndicate. He's pretty much put out about that, according to Phil."

"I should think he would be," said Terrill. "Anyhow," he continued, "they'll know better than to bet against Belmont after this."

Coach Gordon's eyes sparkled. "I hope," he declared earnestly, "that this will be a lesson to them. We don't want any betting here at college." |

"And we don't want anyone tampering with our players, either," Ben Winslow put in.

Unconsciously, Yank found himself looking across the room at Budd Groton. The big first baseman had not said much since the game had ended, and it seemed to Yank as if Budd were worried about something. He resolved to have a talk with the other boy, if possible, before the night was over.

"How about it?" Yank asked. "Do we have a big celebration after supper?"

Ben Winslow shook his head.

"Not this time, Yank," he answered.

"Why?"

"Most of the fellows will leave for home to-night," Ben explained. "College formally closed this morning, you know, and only the Commencement exercises are left. As a rule, the underclassmen don't stay for that."

"I see."

Yank was disappointed, never-the-less. He had looked forward to a big pee-rade downtown, to the kind of celebration which had been

held after the Steelton football game last fall. But he admitted that the majority of the fellows would want to get home as soon as possible, and he reluctantly resigned himself to a quiet evening. Peanut, he knew, was leaving for his home on Sunday and would undoubtedly want to spend his time in packing.

Yank walked over to the dormitory in company with the other players, where Peanut, Doug Fletcher, and Hal Marvin greeted him joyfully.

"Oh, you Yank!" the fat boy said. "Came through again, I see."

"And you've won your letter in five varsity sports," Hal added. "Congratulations!"

Yank had hardly given that side of the game a thought, but now that Hal spoke about it, he realized that he had indeed accomplished the feat which had never been equalled at Belmont. Still——

"It was only luck that I got my baseball letter, Hal," he said. "In another two innings

Steelton would have knocked me all over the lot."

But Hal only smiled. "You tell that to the Marines," he answered.

On the porch after supper, Yank came across Budd Groton. The big first baseman was sitting by himself on one of the benches, and as Yank walked over to him, he moved over without speaking.

Yank sat down beside him, and waited for a moment. Then:

"Something the matter, Budd?" he asked.

"Nothing very much, I suppose," Budd answered. "Only I'm worried a little about the Suydam essay prize."

"What's that?" Yank asked curiously.

"It's a prize of one hundred and fifty dollars given to a member of the junior class who wins first place in an essay contest. And I'm one of the two men that tried for it."

"Haven't you heard yet?"

"No. I can find out the result by just walking over to the Registrar's office," he contin-

ued. "But—but I haven't got the nerve to do it."

For a moment Yank was silent, and the boy beside him cleared his throat huskily.

"It really means a lot to me," he explained. "If I can win the thing, I'll probably have enough money to keep on next year, with what I can earn this summer. But if I lose, maybe I won't be able to come back next year."

"That's sure hard lines." Yank hesitated. "If you'd like to borrow from me to see you through, Budd," he said, "I can lend you some. My dad has plenty——"

But Budd Groton shook his head.

"Thanks, Yank," he said quietly. "That's mighty good of you, but I'm pretty deep in debt already, and I can't conscientiously borrow any more. But you're mighty fine, just the same."

"Maybe," Yank suggested, "you've won the prize. Why not let me go over and find out?"

The big first baseman regarded him gratefully.

"If you don't mind," he said, "I—I wish you would."

Yank stood up.

"You wait here," he ordered. "I'll be back in five minutes."

On the way to the Registrar's office, it occurred to him that Budd could have gotten out of his difficulty by listening to the offer that the gambling syndicate had made to him. But even though he knew that his refusal might mean he would have to leave college, Budd had indignantly refused to be bribed.

"He's all right," Yank told himself. "And we need that kind of fellow here at Belmont. He'll simply *have* to stick."

But Yank found, upon inquiry at the office, that Budd had lost out in his contest for the essay prize; which meant, probably, that he would be forced to quit college.

CHAPTER XIV

THE REWARD

BUDD GROTON took the announcement quietly enough.

"It's a big disappointment," he said steadily, "for I rather thought that I'd get it."

"And you'll have to quit?" Yank asked.

"I guess so." The varsity first baseman rose to his feet and shoved his hands into his trouser pockets. "I can't possibly make more than two hundred dollars this summer," he said, "and that won't be nearly enough to put me through."

"Can't you work during the college term next year?"

"Not very much." Budd's eyes were troubled. "I'm taking the engineering course," he explained, "and laboratory hours keep me

engaged until four o'clock every day. And at night, there's studying to do."

Yank could not for the moment think of any suitable answer. Budd Groton's problem was entirely outside of his own experience, for he had always had all the money that he needed, and it had never occurred to him that others might be differently situated. Suddenly, he looked up.

"Are there many fellows in college who are working their way through?" he asked curiously.

The other boy nodded.

"Scores of them," he answered. "And they're mighty good men, too."

And Yank was silent. Strangely, in the past two days he had begun to get a new viewpoint of college. He had, during almost his entire freshman year, been concerned chiefly with athletics; and he had thought, because varsity sports had been his own chief concern, that his fellow students also considered the success of the Belmont teams the one most important fac-

tor of college life. But at the beginning of Commencement festivities, he had seen hundreds of alumni return to the familiar campus, had heard of the meetings they had held to consider other questions besides athletics, had glimpsed the pride in the faces of the graduating class, not because Belmont had finished a successful year on the football gridiron and basketball court, but rather because they had passed successfully through four years of preparation and were at last ready to take their places as trained men in the business or professional world. And now, if Budd Groton should have to quit, it would mean that the whole course of his life would be changed, that possibly the stamp of failure would be imprinted upon him. And when you came right down to it, Yank asked himself, what did a single baseball victory matter when compared to a thing like that?

"Budd," he said quietly, "you can't give up in your last year at Belmont. That would be

almost a tragedy. If you'll only let me lend you the money——"

But the other boy shook his head.

"I can't do that, Yank," he answered. "I'm too much in debt already."

"But you'll *try* to come back, won't you?" Yank insisted.

"Yes, I'll start in next year and keep on as long as I can. But—but it won't pan out, Yank. I know from experience."

"Maybe," Yank suggested hopefully, "something unexpected will turn up."

Budd only shook his head hopelessly.

"I think I'll go upstairs and start packing," he said. "See you to-morrow before I go, Yank."

"Yes, Budd, I'll look you up."

Most of the thrill of the baseball victory had departed from Yank Brown. He was strangely depressed, more so than he had been since entering college; and for a long time he sat on the porch of the dormitory, while from the Chapel across the campus floated the sound of

the Glee Club singing at their annual Commencement concert. Finally, however, Yank arose and made his way to his room.

Peanut Putnam, his fat face flushed, greeted him almost indignantly.

"Where you been?" he demanded. "Here I am working like a horse, and you ain't doing a single thing. Why don't you start to pack?"

"I've just been talking to Budd Groton," Yank explained, ignoring the question. "He thinks that he'll have to quit college."

"Why? He's only got one more year, hasn't he?"

"Yes, but he's run out of money and won't borrow any more."

"That's hard luck!" Peanut did not seem to be particularly impressed. "He's the fellow the gamblers tried to bribe, isn't he?"

Yank nodded.

"Yes," he answered.

They relapsed into silence, Peanut busy with his packing and Yank watching him indifferently. Finally, however, Peanut spoke.

"I should think you'd begin getting your own stuff together," he suggested.

"I'll do it to-morrow." Yank walked over to the window and looked thoughtfully out upon the campus. "Peanut," he said suddenly, "I'm going to get Budd Groton and take a walk downtown. Want to come?"

"Not now, I'm too busy."

"Don't mind if I go, do you?"

"Nope!"

"Think I'll run along then. Be back before ten, surely."

The fat boy turned again to his work, and Yank made his way to the third floor of the building where Groton had his room. He found the other sitting at his desk, his chin cupped in his hands; but at sight of Yank, he turned and nodded pleasantly.

"Glad to see you, Yank," he said. "What's on your mind?"

"Nothing much, except that I'm restless," Yank answered. "My room-mate's packing

and I'm looking for someone to go downtown and have something to eat. How about it?"

"All right," agreed Budd. "I ought to be packing, and I can't go just yet, anyhow. But if you'll wait a while——"

"Sure," Yank said. "No hurry at all."

"I'm expecting visitors any time now," Budd continued. "Phil Rollins just telephoned that he and his father were coming up to see me. They want to find out more about that gambling bunch."

"I hope they——" Yank paused as footsteps sounded in the corridor. "They're coming now," he said.

Phil Rollins' father proved to be a big man, with a chin that stuck out aggressively and small black eyes in which there was always the hint of a twinkle.

"I'm glad to meet you two men," he said, after Phil had introduced him. "And I want to congratulate you, Mr. Brown, on saving the game after Phil had fallen down."

"He didn't fall down," Yank answered in-

stantly. "That was a great thing Phil did, Mr. Rollins."

"I'm glad that the college seems to think so." The older man turned to Budd Groton. "My son tells me," he began, "that you are the player that the gamblers tried to bribe."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you mind describing to me the person who came to you with the offer?"

"Not at all." Budd's eyes grew thoughtful. "He was a little chap," he said, "with curly brown hair and a long scar on one cheek. That's about all I can say about him, but I'd know him anywhere if I once laid eyes on him."

Mr. Rollins listened closely. "From what you say," he declared, "I have reason to believe that he is the same man who filed the telegram in my name."

"Did you look **that** up?" Yank asked curiously.

"Yes, before I left Pittsburg this morning, I went to the telegraph office from which the message was sent and secured a description of

the man who sent it. Fortunately, the people at the office remembered."

"And was he the same man?" Budd demanded.

"The descriptions tally." Suddenly, Mr. Rollins' lips tightened. "I am determined," he said, "to catch those gamblers if it is possible to do so and lodge them in jail where they belong. And only to-night I have visited the local police station and offered a reward of five hundred dollars for information leading to their arrest."

The eyes of Yank Brown and Budd Groton opened wide.

"Five hundred dollars!" Budd exclaimed wonderingly. "That's a lot of money, Mr. Rollins."

"I know it is, but it's worth triple that amount to catch the rascals who perpetrated that outrage. And now that we've got a clue to start on, I think I'll call the station again."

"I hope you get them," Yank said earnestly.

"We're all hoping for the same thing, I

guess." The two visitors stood up, and the older man held out his hand. "I'm glad to have met you men," he said steadily. "And I want again to congratulate you both."

After he had gone, Yank and Budd looked at each other wonderingly.

"He sure does take the thing seriously," Yank announced. "But he can afford the money, I suppose."

"He's rich," Budd answered. Then his eyes grew somber. "It must be nice to be able to give away five hundred bucks!" he added.

For a moment they were silent.

"How about going downtown?" Yank suggested. "We can drop in at the Mansion House for some coffee and a club sandwich. I didn't eat much supper and I'm hungry."

Budd stood up. "So am I," he said. "Let's go."

On the way across the campus, they again heard the Glee Club singing. The concert must have been near its conclusion, for the men were singing the Alma Mater song; and as the strain

of the familiar tune floated over the darkened campus, the two halted and waited until the song was finished.

"When I hear a thing like that," Budd said quietly, "it makes it all the harder to think that perhaps I'll be forced to quit Belmont without my degree. It's a great song, Yank, and a great little college."

"You just bet it is!"

They walked in silence, passing through the stone gateway and down the long street which led from the campus to the center of the town. The majority of the students had already left for home, and even Collegeville itself seemed strangely deserted. The restaurant of the Mansion House, however, was fairly well filled, but the two boys managed to find a seat near the door, which looked directly out upon the main lobby.

"It was in this place that the gamblers tried to hold me up," Budd announced, his eyes flashing. "I wonder if by any chance the clerk knows anything about them."

"Probably not," Yank answered. "They wouldn't be likely to go where they were known."

"Still—" Suddenly Budd Groton paused, and his eyes opened wide. "Yank!" he gasped, in a low voice, "*I—there he goes now!*"

Budd was sitting so that he commanded a clear view of the main entrance to the hotel, but Yank had his back to the door. At the other boy's word, however, Yank turned curiously, and was just in time to see a small man with curly brown hair enter the building.

"Do you mean to say he's one of the gamblers?" he demanded.

Budd nodded excitedly. "Yes," he whispered huskily, "that's the very fellow!"

They watched eagerly and with thumping hearts while the new arrival walked over to the desk, secured a key from the clerk, and hurried upstairs. Then Budd Groton leaped to his feet.

"Come on," he said, "we've *got* to catch him."

Evidently, however, Budd did not have any definite plan in mind, and as soon as they were in the lobby, Yank held out his hand restrainingly.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Go and get a cop at once," Budd answered. "And have the fellow arrested."

But Yank shook his head.

"We'd better make sure where he is first," he suggested. "Wait a second and I'll talk to the clerk."

The man at the desk smiled cordially as Yank walked across the room.

"Some game you pitched to-day, Brown!" he said. "I almost yelled my head off for you."

But Yank had other things on his mind at that moment.

"Bill," he whispered excitedly, (all of the students called the clerk Bill.) "Can you tell me the number of the room that man just went to?"

"Sure! It's thirty-one. But what's the big idea?"

"We have reason to think that he's a crook," Yank explained quickly. "And we want you to help us catch him."

The clerk was all attention.

"You bet I will!" he answered instantly. "What's the idea?"

"I want you to give me the key to the next room, if you've got it, and then telephone the police to send at least three men up here. Can you do that?"

"Sure." The man behind the desk turned and selected a key from the rack. "Here's thirty-two," he said. "Go to it, and I'll telephone now."

As he picked up the receiver, Yank hurried back to where Budd was standing.

"Come on!" he said.

On the way upstairs, he explained his plan.

"We'll go upstairs," he said, "and see if we can hear anything. The clerk's telephoning for the police, and we'll keep watch until they come."

Budd followed without comment, and a

minute later he followed Yank into room thirty-two. Fortunately, it was unoccupied, but a transom over the door leading to the next room was open, and through the aperture they could hear the sound of voices.

They could hear the words of the men in the next room clearly.

"Someone spilled the beans somewhere," one of them said huskily, "and we're out a thousand dollars. What are we going to do about it?"

"Nothin', as far as I can see," another voice answered. "If it hadn't been for that fellow Brown, we'd of been all right. I'd like to get him sometime."

"We can't bother about that now. You explained to the chief, didn't you?"

"Yes, and he's sore as a crab."

"Well, we can't help that. The thing for us to do is to get out of this burg and beat it back to the city. There's a train in fifteen minutes. How about it?"

"I'm willin'. But, of course, there ain't any

chance of anyone spotting us. That guy Groton knew enough to keep his mouth shut."

"Good thing he did."

There was the sound of scraping chairs in the next room; and Yank Brown seized his companion's arm excitedly.

"They're going," he whispered. "Come on, we'd better get in the hall and stop them."

They reached the corridor only a few seconds before the door of room thirty-one opened and the two men walked out. And at the sight of them, Yank Brown stepped forward.

"Just a moment, gentlemen," he said evenly. "We want a word with you."

The two gamblers halted in their tracks, and the smaller man with a scar on his cheek looked up apprehensively.

"One of them's that fellow Groton," he announced hoarsely.

But the second man, who was evidently the leader, advanced threateningly.

"We've got to catch a train for New York," he declared blusteringly, "and we ain't got any

time for a word with anyone. Get out of the way."

But the two boys held their ground.

"You're going to stay right where you are until the police come to get you," Budd Gorton announced. "And we're here to see that you do it."

At the mention of the police, the men's faces paled. For a moment, they stood indecisively, and then the larger of the two reached calmly into his back pocket and drew forth his hand. Bright steel glittered beneath the rays of the electric lights.

"I ain't got no time for fooling," he said threateningly. "You two kids step into that room in back of you, or I'll fill you full of lead."

There was no doubting his sincerity, for his eyes gleamed evilly and his hand was steady.

"Hurry!" he said. "Get in there!"

For a moment, the two boys hesitated. They were not cowards, by any means, but neither were they foolhardy, and their good judgment

told them that for the present moment at least the gamblers held the upper hand.

"If you're caught," Yank said quietly, "there'll be another charge against you of carrying concealed weapons. You know that, of course?"

But the man with the revolver shook his head impatiently.

"Get in there!" he commanded.

They took a single step backward; and then, upon the stairs below them, sounded the tramp of heavy footsteps.

"It's the police," Yank said.

The gamblers, brushing aside the boys, dashed desperately for the stairs. But before they reached the first step, they found themselves confronted by three blue-coated officers.

"Put your hands up," the police sergeant commanded. "You're under arrest."

Just for an instant, the larger of the two men hesitated; and then, his defiance suddenly gone, he raised his arms above his head.



"Get in there!" he commanded.

"What's the idea?" he muttered gruffly.
"You ain't got nothing on us."

"Clean out his pockets, officer," said Yank.
"He has a gun." The policeman lost no time in doing so, and took the two men into custody. The leader still blustered. "You'll sweat for this," he announced.

But Yank did not wait to hear the answer of the police. Impulsively, he turned to the wide-eyed Budd Groton beside him.

"Budd," he said happily, "you know what this means to you, don't you?"

The other boy shook his head.

"It means," Yank continued, "that Mr. Rollins' reward of five hundred dollars is yours."

"I—I—," Budd Groton smiled dazedly.
"Not all mine," he answered. "We go shares on that."

But Yank vetoed the suggestion instantly.

"It was you who spotted the man," he declared quietly. "And the money's all yours, Budd." Suddenly, he held out his hand, and the big first baseman gripped it crushingly.

"That means," he said joyfully, "that I can come back to college next year!"

Yank grinned into his shining eyes. Somehow, the solving of Budd Groton's problem made him even happier than had the baseball victory over Steelton.

CHAPTER XV

THE BRONZE SHIELD

PEANUT was still up when Yank returned to the dormitory with the story of his adventure. The fat boy listened interestedly, and when Yank had finished, he grunted non-committally.

"Some people have all the luck," he grumbled. "Here I am, staying behind because I had a duty to perform, while you let your packing go hang and fall into something soft. That's the way with me—I'm always out of luck."

But Yank only grimaced.

"If you call it luck to have a loaded revolver pointed at you," he said, "then you can have all of it you want. But *I'd* be satisfied to stick around home."

"Anyhow," Peanut added, somewhat molli-

fied, "you ought to have claimed half of the reward."

Yank, however, shook his head at that.

"It was really Budd who gave the information," he contended. "If he hadn't been there, I never would have known a thing about it."

"I suppose not," Peanut agreed. "But Budd ought to be mighty grateful to you, just the same."

"He is." Yank chuckled softly. "You haven't been working all this time, have you?" he asked, changing the subject.

"No!" Peanut grew suddenly mysterious. "Jim Manley dropped in to talk to me a while," he announced.

"Jim Manley? What did he want with you?"

The fat boy smiled importantly.

"Oh," he said carelessly, "he's president of the senior class, you know, and he came to consult me about Commencement."

Yank contemplated him.

"Now that you've had your little joke," he

suggested, "suppose you tell me what he really came for."

"It ain't any joke," Peanut declared indignantly. "And he's persuaded me to stay over until after Commencement."

"Why?"

"Oh, he said that freshmen never understand what college really means if they don't stick around the few last days." Suddenly Peanut looked up, and his eyes grew serious. "Listen, Yank," he said, "you told me this morning that your family is in California until the first of July. Why don't you wait until then to go home and come up to Circleville with me?"

For a moment Yank hesitated, for there was really no reason why he shouldn't accept his room-mate's invitation.

"Maybe I will do that," he decided, "and thanks, Peanut!"

The fat boy chuckled delightedly.

"The reason I'm asking you," he explained, "is because I want to exhibit you to my fellow

citizens as the greatest all-round athlete in captivity."

"Bosh!" Yank said. "Let's go to bed."

The next day was Sunday, and Yank spent most of his time sitting in his dormitory room and visiting the few students who had not yet gone home. Doug Fletcher and Hal Marvin were staying over until Wednesday, and in the afternoon they all took a walk along the river bank. Hal and Doug chaffed Yank a little about his capture of the gamblers but they all agreed that it was a good thing for the college, and would make future betting on Belmont games impossible.

"And I'm glad, too, that Budd Groton can stick in college," Hal declared. "He's a prince, and the baseball team ought to elect him captain."

Yank had not given much thought to the baseball captaincy; but he knew that a meeting of the team had been called for Monday morning and that he would be entitled to a vote.

"That's right," he answered thoughtfully, "we ought to do something for Budd."

He decided, though, that it was not up to him to nominate Groton, for he had only been a member of the squad for a week and he felt that his place was in the background. He attended the meeting, though, and waited curiously.

Coach Gordon, as was customary, took charge of the election.

"Men," he said, "before we vote for captain, I want to tell you all how much I have enjoyed the season and to thank you for your loyalty and support. It's been a great year for Belmont and I am sure that we are all mighty glad that we, too, came through in the final game."

The players nodded in unanimous agreement.

"We sure are," Skeets Terrill said.

"And now to the election," the coach continued briskly. "The nominations are open."

Captain Ben Winslow rose to his feet.

"I nominate Budd Groton," he said.

One of the other players seconded the name instantly, but the first baseman, leaping to his feet, held up his hand for silence.

"Fellows," he announced, "I appreciate it very much, of course, but I have the feeling somehow that you're putting me up because I wouldn't stand for being bribed by that gambling crowd. And—and I don't want to be rewarded for being honest."

"But," Ben Winslow protested, "you're in line for the captaincy."

"Not so very much," Budd answered. "And if you don't mind I'm going to withdraw my name and suggest that we elect unanimously a fellow who really deserves it." He paused for a moment. "I mean Phil Rollins," he concluded.

Someone started to clap at that, and the others joined in. The star pitcher, his face crimson, grinned embarrassedly from one corner of the room.

"I——," he began.

But the Belmont shortstop jumped to his feet.

"Let's call it a motion and make it unanimous," he suggested.

The others agreed enthusiastically, and the coach held up his hand.

"Phil Rollins is, therefore, elected captain of the Belmont baseball team," he said.

On the way back to the dormitory, Yank passed the majority of the members of the senior class. They had held a meeting a short time before in the library, the purpose of which Yank was in ignorance; but he noticed that many of them were looking at him closely and that two or three went so far as to smile openly. And when he reached his room in the dormitory, Jim Manley was again talking to Peanut.

The senior president looked up almost guiltily as Yank entered, but Peanut was natural enough.

"Jim and I are still talking over Commencement affairs," he said importantly.

The other boy agreed. "Coming over to

Class Day exercises this afternoon, aren't you, Yank?" he inquired.

Yank looked up in half surprise.

"Yes," he answered, "I expect to."

"It's a good thing for you freshmen to see such things," the senior continued. "It gives you a better idea of the real meaning of college." He pulled his watch from his pocket and glanced at it. "I must run along," he said. "See you later, maybe."

After he had gone, Yank turned to Peanut questioningly.

"Chum," he asked earnestly, "what is the thing that you and Manley seem so interested in?"

But Peanut refused to be cornered.

"I've explained to you before," he answered in feigned indignation. "Just because I happen to be friendly with the president of the senior class, you seem to think that there's something behind it. To tell you the honest truth, I think that he *likes* me, is struck by my remarkable personality."

Peanut dodged just in time to escape the pillow which came hurtling at his head; and although Yank tried to "pump" him further during the remainder of the morning, the fat boy continued to maintain that there was nothing unusual at all in the two visits of the influential senior.

"I suppose," he said once, "that you think it's *you* we're talking about."

"No," Yank answered quietly, "I don't think that. But I can't help wondering."

Class Day exercises, Peanut explained, were held both in the gymnasium and on the campus.

"They have the regular exercises inside the gym," he declared, "and read the class history and give the prophecy and things like that in there. Then they all go out on the main campus and have an ivy planting, and pipe oration and that kind of stuff. Jim Manley says that we ought to stick around to it all."

"We might just as well," Yank answered, "there isn't anything else to do."

After lunch Doug Fletcher and Hal Marvin

dropped into their room. Both boys were dressed in white flannels and blue coats, and Yank looked over at them doubtfully.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Going to a party?"

"No," Hal answered, "just to Class Day. Hurry up and get your best duds on, and come with us."

Yank frowned.

"I intended to wear my golf suit," he said. "What's the matter with that?"

It seemed to him that the three other boys glanced at each other knowingly before Peanut spoke.

"Nonsense!" the fat boy exclaimed. "Hurry up and get dressed."

The exercises had already started when Yank was finally ready.

"All we'll miss is the address of the president," Hal declared. "And the outside exercises are the best, anyhow."

At the entrance to the gymnasium, hanging on the outside of the trophy case, Yank dis-

covered a large bronze placard, with the official seal of the college engraved upon it. The lower portion, however, was covered with a black cloth, and Yank regarded it curiously.

"What's that for?" he asked.

It was Hal Marvin who answered.

"That's the college placard," he explained, "that is given every year at Class Day to the undergraduate who has during the year done the most for the college."

Yank still regarded it thoughtfully.

"Jim Manley will get it, I suppose," he said.

"It's generally given to a senior," Hal answered shortly. "Let's go on in."

Yank enjoyed the exercises in the gymnasium, but it was not until the senior class filed out of the building and grouped themselves around the corner of the college Chapel that he was really impressed.

There were perhaps five hundred visitors who followed the graduates, crowded in a large circle about them, and listened eagerly to the speaker, who said something about the ivy

which he was planting being a token of their own loyalty to Belmont, growing stronger and stronger with the succeeding years.

Yank listened breathlessly. The day was perfect, with the summer sun shining down upon them from a sky of unshaded blue, with the green of the grass beneath their feet, and the modulated tones of the speaker the only break in the peaceful silence. He knew, as he stood there quietly, that he would never quite forget that scene; the graduates themselves standing in black cap and gown, the circle of eager faces around them, and in the near distance, the ivy-covered walls of the brown-stone buildings. There was something impressive about it, something almost thrilling. It was better even than a football game.

"It's great, Peanut!" he whispered to the boy beside him. "This is the kind of thing that makes men love their college."

The fat boy bent his head without answering; and when the ivy planting was ended, they followed the shifting crowd across the

campus to the spot where the class tree was to be planted. There was another speech then; and finally, when the ground was leveled once again, the class adjoined to the historic Belmont cannon, where each member was given a clay pipe and some tobacco. There they puffed silently, even those who had never smoked before, while one of their members spoke again about college loyalty and the spirit of Belmont that never dies.

And then, while the seniors remained in their places, the venerable President of the college himself took his place before them. In his hand he carried the bronze seal which Yank had noticed in the gymnasium. And as he held up his hand, the chattering crowd relapsed into silence, and the seniors stirred restlessly.

"Years ago," the President announced, "one of our loyal alumni established a custom at Belmont which has now taken its place among our most cherished traditions. As many of you know, at Commencement time every year this bronze seal is given to that member of our

student body who in the opinion of the senior class has most loyally and unselfishly served his Alma Mater. It is, I would say, the highest honor that a Belmont man can attain, the greatest reward which the college can give to one of her sons."

The speaker paused for a moment, and the circle of onlookers waited expectantly.

"There is little more that I can say," the President continued finally, "except to add my measure of praise for the man upon whom this honor is about to fall. He has, in my opinion, justified the selection which the seniors have made, and I congratulate him most heartily."

With a quick movement of his arm, the head of the college pulled the black cloth from below the lower half of the placard. Then in the silence of the sun-streaked campus, he read the name engraved upon it.

"This placard is given in the year 1922 to Frank T. Brown, of the freshman class," he announced solemnly.

For a moment the silence remained un-

broken; and then Peanut Putnam, his fat face wreathed in smiles, seized Yank grippingly by the arm.

"That's you, Yank!" he muttered hoarsely to the astounded boy beside him. "Don't you even know your own name?"

Yank Brown nodded dazedly.

"There—there must be some mistake," he stammered.

But miraculously, a path had been opened before him, leaving the way clear to where the President was waiting. Hardly knowing what he was doing, Yank found himself walking forward. And then, in another few seconds, he stood in the center of the circle.

"Mr. Brown," the kindly old man in front of him said quietly, "this placard is yours to keep and cherish so long as your memories of Belmont College remain. It is a supreme honor, and one to which I know you will always stand true."

Yank, inclining his head slightly, accepted the placard, and held it awkwardly before him.

And then, so quickly that he could hardly believe his ears, the surrounding crowd broke into a torrent of applause.

And Yank, standing there foolishly in the center of the beaming circle of faces, suddenly realized that in after years that moment would never quite be absent from his thoughts.

For he had given all that he had to his college—and his college had in return bestowed upon him her greatest reward.

Yank Brown's freshman year was over; but in the year to come still other activities awaited him. How he measured up to them is the theme of the next book in this series, "Yank Brown, Honor Man."

